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HITCH

#27 · $4
fall 2001
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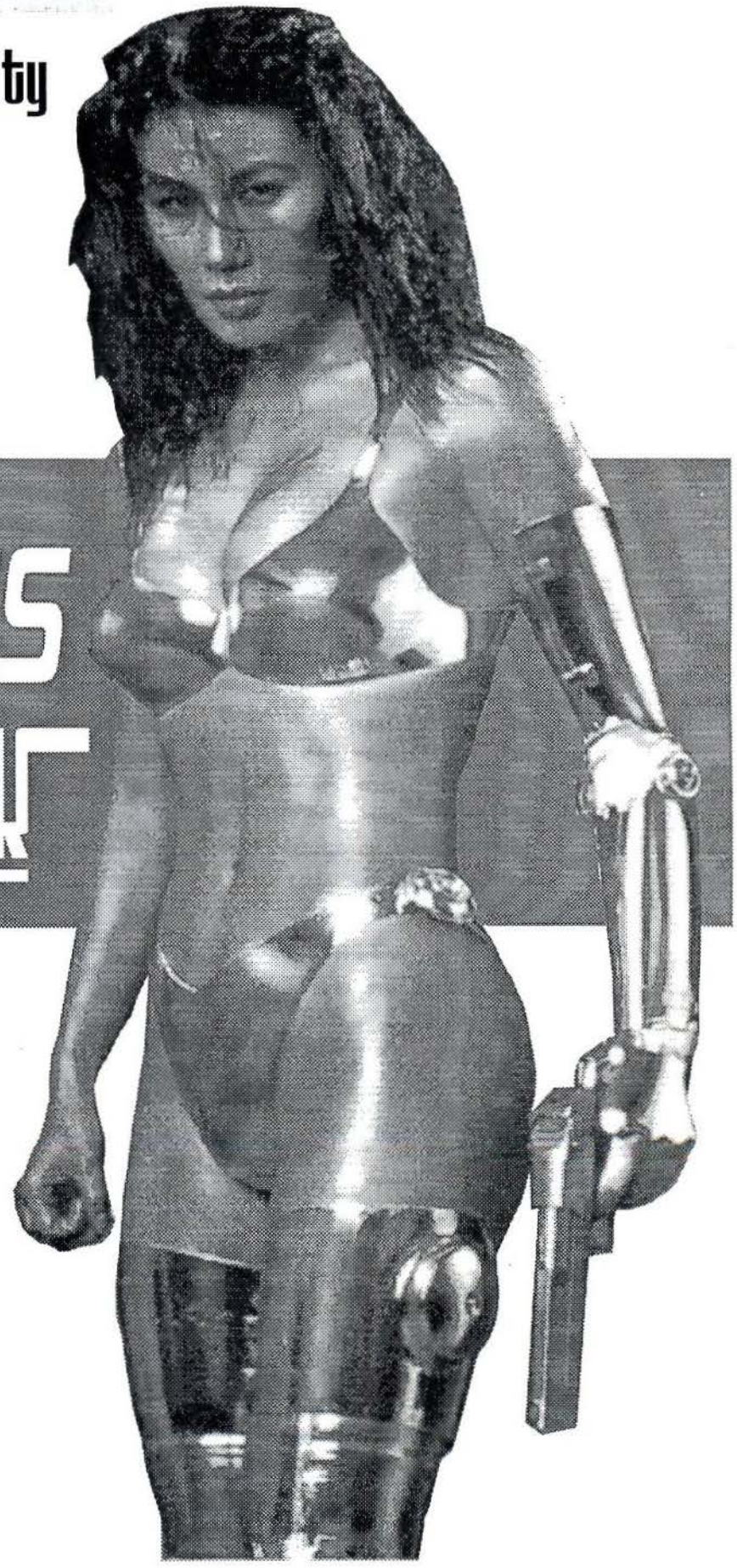
the journal of pop culture absurdity



FOREIGN FILMS THAT DON'T SUCK

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PLUS **the jerky boys!**

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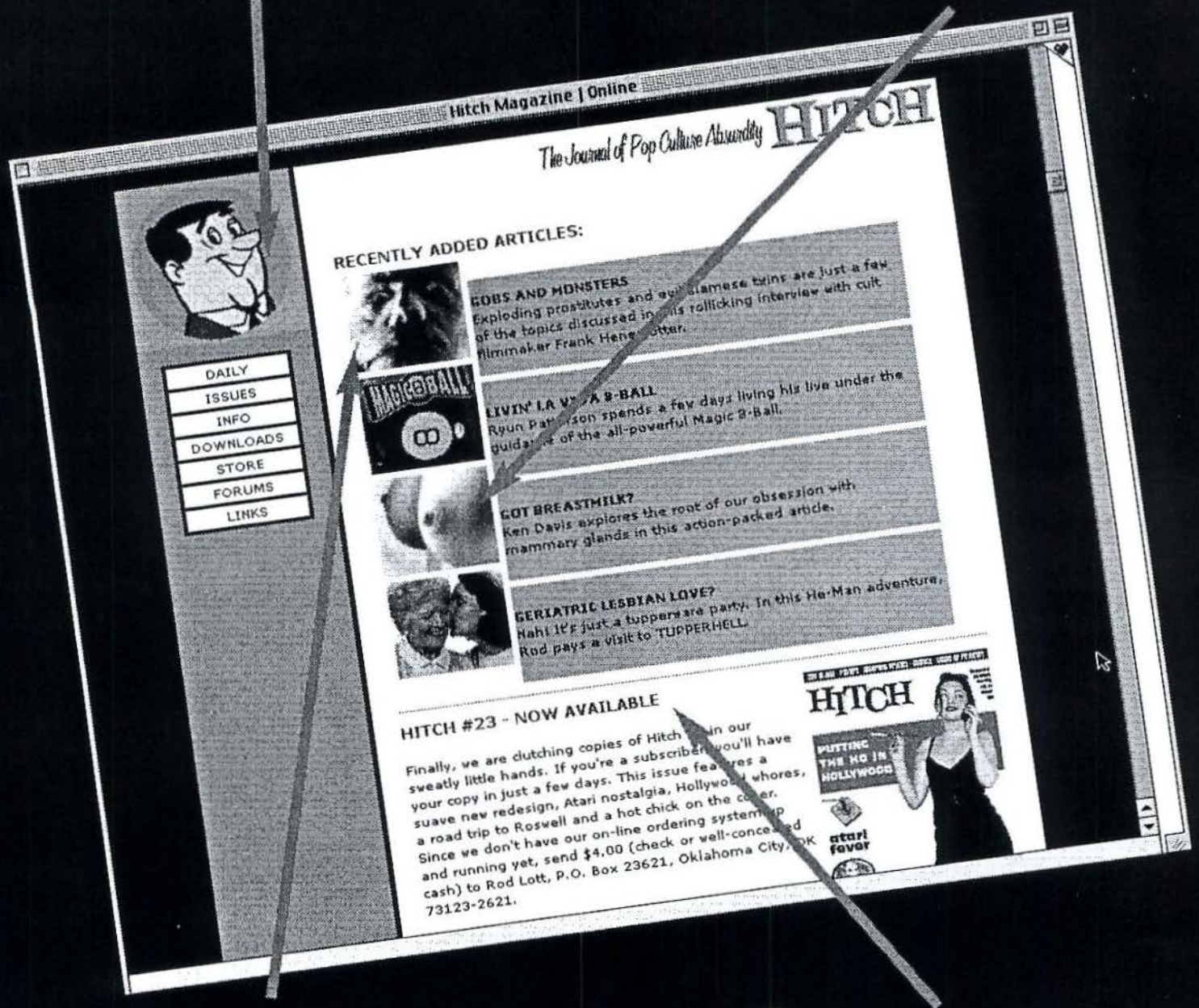
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iN HITCH

issue twenty-seven
fall 2001

Commit Insecticide at Colorado's Giant Bug Museum/ 10

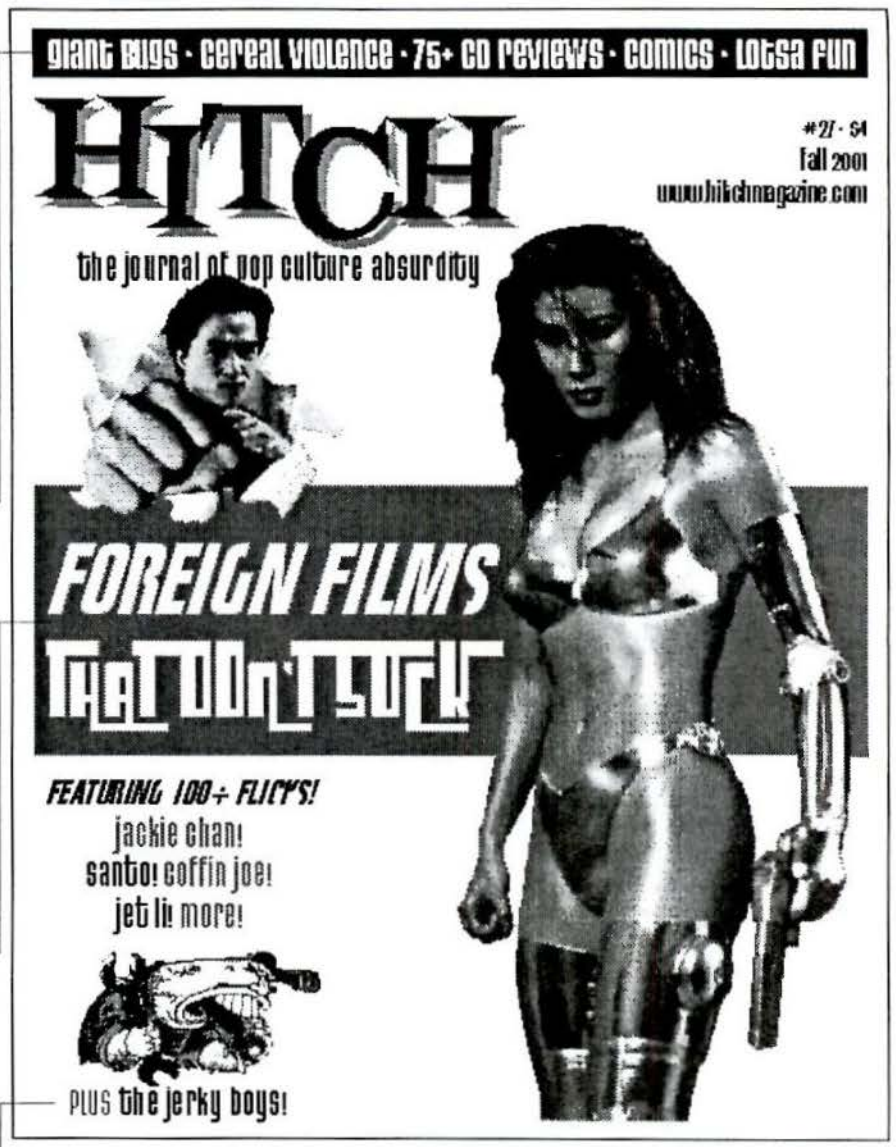
Here at **HITCH**, we really don't get out much. (If we did, who would do the magazine?) But when we do, we hope it involves freakishly large insects and arachnids, collected for our amusement in the middle of nowhere. And you can go, too! By Rod Lott.

Foreign Films That Don't Suck / 14

By that, we mean stuff that's not nominated for the Best Foreign Film Oscar each year. Okay, okay, so *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is the exception, but *Babette's Feast*? Yecch. Here's our guide to more than 100 non-American flicks worth your while. By just about everyone at **HITCH**.

Hey, Jerky! Listen When I'm Talkin' to Youse! / 28

There are a ton of prank phone call CDs out there, and they're not funny. You could blame The Jerky Boys for starting it all ... but they're still funny. No, really! **HITCH** interviews the man of at least a dozen voices, Johnny Brennan. By Rod Lott.



About the Cover

Hong Kong starlet Aimen Wong – she of the plastic blue bikini – holds down the fort in 1998's *Her Name Is Cat*, one of those foreign films that doesn't suck. Not that we've seen it. But it made for a terrific cover image, didn't it? Judging by that alone, we're sure the movie is worthy viewing, so we feel that's justification enough.

Other Stuff

Nothing / nowhere

Usually, this is where we'd list all the other great, wonderful, lengthy articles you can find that aren't listed above. But there aren't any, because "Foreign Films That Don't Suck" is massive and takes up too many pages. Actually, we planned it that way. This seems like a perfect time to tell you that this Adobe Garamond font is the official body copy throughout, even in reviews. And now we're using EC Franklin Gothic Extra Condensed for spiffy headings.

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THAT ROD GUY

THE SEVEN-YEAR HITCH

This issue marks HITCH's seventh anniversary. *Seventh!*

There aren't many things I've done continuously for seven years except breathe and urinate, so this is something worth celebrating.

Hard to believe, but HITCH is three years older than my son and nearly six years older than my daughter. Not hard to believe is that I often think of HITCH as my third child, as much time and attention as it demands.

LOOK TO THE TOWER!

Starting with this issue, you can find HITCH carried in Tower Records stores nationwide! Spread the word! Tell your friends! Visit Tower and stick HITCH right up front on the shelf!

This marks the first time in five years we've had a distributor. In our infant stage, we signed a year-long deal with Fine Print in Austin, Texas. As some of you know, Fine Print is no longer in business. Nor do they deserve to be.

As many burned zinesters will tell you, Fine Print screwed over a lot of people, who didn't get paid what they were owed when the company decided to declare bankruptcy.

I was lucky in that I received one payment from them ... for a measly $50, which wasn't all I had coming my way after 12 months.

But we've heard nothing but great things about Tower's system and support of small publications, so we're excited.

HEAPIN' MAILBAG

HITCH
P.O. Box 23621
Oklahoma City, OK 73123-2621

e-mail: RLott@aol.com

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Rod:

I nominate HITCH for the greatest latrine read of all time – surpassing even the corset section of the old Sears catalog. It's increasingly more difficult to stay at the edge, the appropriation process is so accelerated.

Russ Armstrong
Churchville, PA

THE USUAL

Hey Rod –

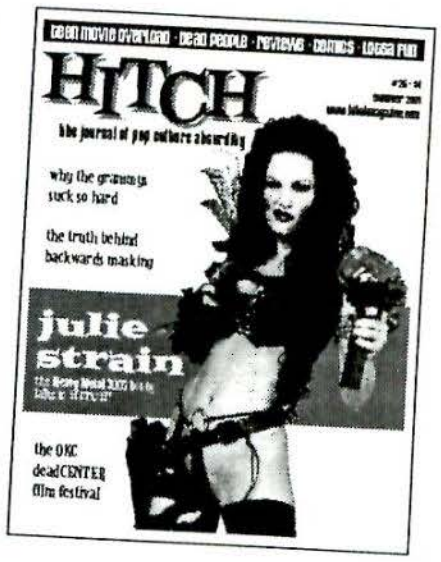
I liked the new issue (HITCH 26). While it may not be one of the all-time best issues, it's still really good.

I really liked the illustration that went with Richard York's *DVDemented!* Article. That made me laugh more than anything in the issue, I think. And I also appreciated the gratuitous bikini shots of Hewitt and Dunst.

The funny thing was as I was looking at the issue, I was just thinking to myself – this looks like so much fucking work! I was almost overwhelmed and nauseated. Not because of the magazine itself, but because I was thinking about putting it together – flowing all that text, placing the images, laying out the articles.

So anyway, you have my respect and admiration for putting this mag out for so many years and keeping the quality and enthusiasm up. The issues are even better now than when you first started and that's a pretty rare thing.

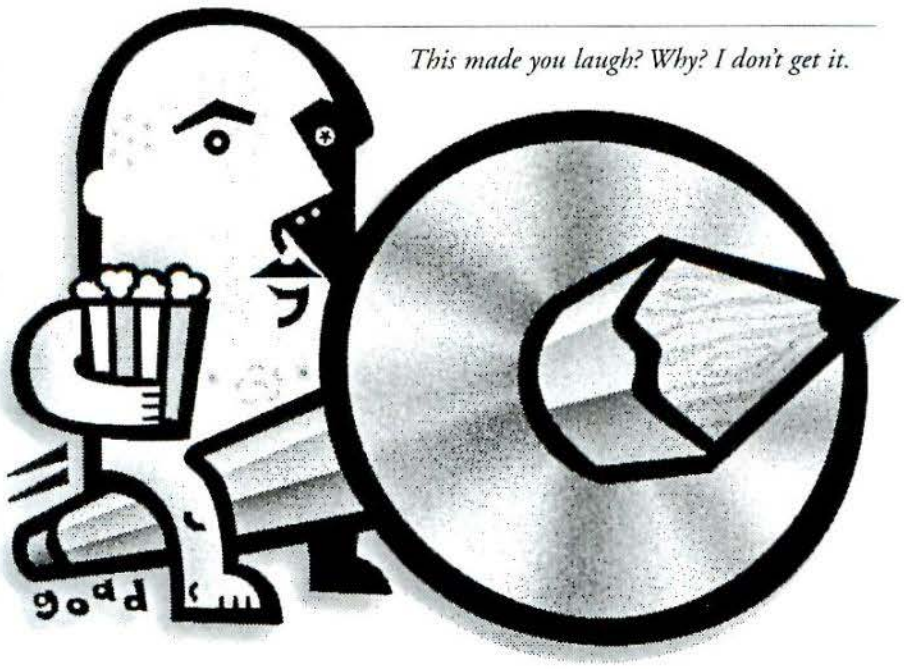
Ed Donovan
Burbank, CA



Rod–

I love the issue – it rocks. You done *goood*, boy.

Julie Strain
Los Angeles, CA



This made you laugh? Why? I don't get it.

A, LETTER! FROM, ABROAD!

Dear Friend, Rod Lott, Editor of HITCH! Magazine.

Suprise! Here comes an little letter from Sweden (the country of sex and sin??) to you! This very letter, has gone by airmail, a very long way, to reach you, up there in Oklahoma, so I hope that you will receive it safely. My name, is: *Ulf Bågewhammar*, and I am a Swedish guy, and I live in a small city, in the

south of Sweden. The name of the city, is Eksjö, and it has an population of 13.000 people, living here! But it's a nice place to live in, and I enjoy living here!!! I have just been released, from an' very, very long prison-sentence (5 years) well, for me it was very long anyway. And it feels great to be alive and *free*! Especially now, when springtime, and summer is "just around the corner." I saw *your "ad"* in *SWV* (Something Weird Video's) cataloge-update, and I got very interested. *I'm enclosing U.S. $5*, so that you can, send me your most *recent issue of* **HITCH**! to me. (Hopefully by airmail.) I have heard a lot of *good things* about **HITCH**, but never had a chance to read it! Please hurry, and send me my magazine, I'm watching my mailbox every day from now on. O.K, my friend, take care, and stay cool, and I shall try to do the same!

PS: Have you got any "twisters" (tornadoes) in OKC recently? I saw an documentary on telly 1 week ago, about twisters, in Oklahoma. Take care + write back soon! All my very best wishes, to you!

Ulf Bågewhammar
Eksjö, Sweden

AND YOU WROTE ME WHY?

RLott:

have you seen this girl? i need her email or name but i can't find it anywhere. if you know anyone who could help me (like an internet pirate), please do tell me. i think i'm in love! HELP! thank you

Chris "Never Forgets a Favor" Cayton
caytonissatan@hotmail.com

Chris: You didn't attach a photo, so I have no idea which girl you're referring to, but I'm going to assume you're a big perv anyway. Nice e-mail address, by the way.

Mr. Lott:

Desperately seeking a certain kind of film or video: All I ask is for a film that has three things:

1) well endowed women

2) women walking around in revealing outfits

3) women talking about men in a smutty way

The Sidaris films have this but there hasn't been a new flick since Lethal Ladies.

cleetus@chebucto.ns.ca

SUBS & WHATNOT

Rod:

Please send me back issue #24. What a great magazine! (Or whatever it is?)

Eddie Olson
Oakdale, CA

It is a magazine; it's just disguised *as whatever.*

Howdy,

Can you send me a copy of **HITCH**? I read about it Chip Rowe's *The Book of Zines*. It sounds cool.

Derek Kurth
College Station, TX

CONTEST WINNER!

Rod,

Thanks for the tasty 26th issue of **HITCH** and all those promos. About 3.6 of them were really good. Expect my subscription sometime in July, when the money comes.

Emerson Dameron
Athens, GA

Emerson's winning entry for the "Not-So-Great CD Giveaway:"

Reasons I'm the obvious choice for the CD giveaway:

1. I'm wiser than my years would suggest, kind to the deserving and, most importantly, appreciative. I have a good memory, and I never forget those that have done me right.

2. I could still use some cheering up after that thing last summer.

3. Making mixed tapes is my life. A constant influx of new, uniquely horrible music is what keeps me breathin'.

4. I honestly loved Bergman's *Persona*, but what has it gotten me?

5. When the world is winding down, I've been known to make the best of what's still around. I'm blessed with the sort of can-do resiliance that you or anyone else would want to be associated with.

6. I perfer glass over plastic. In fact, my aversion to plastic sometimes skirts the edges of phobia. Any and all plastic you could send would help me in that British desensitization therapy sort of way.

7. The world may not be ready for the sort of brilliance I'm just now mixing and warming up. Get on my good side early.

8. If any of the CDs you mention are really *worthless*, I could take a clawhammer to 'em and work out some of my epic rage.

9. Doing me a favor is like buying a goodwill savings bond; even if it takes a while for me to get around to returning the favor, the value will constantly accrue.

DREAMWORKS SKG

April 20, 2001

Re: DreamWorks Marketing Policies

To Newspapers carrying reviews and advertising for DreamWorks films:

As you know from previous communications, DreamWorks has established marketing policies in an effort to provide more ratings information to the movie going public. To this end, DreamWorks is furnishing newspapers with the reasons for the MPAA ratings of each DreamWorks film rated PG, PG-13, and R. This will confirm the our following requests of newspapers carrying reviews and advertising for DreamWorks films:

- Each movie review of a DreamWorks film should include the rating reasons for the film.
- As requested by the MPAA, a column listing films in exhibition, the MPAA ratings for each film and the reasons for each rating should be published by newspapers daily.

DreamWorks is working with its other media outlets and the MPAA to more fully inform audiences about the ratings for DreamWorks films, and we appreciate your support and cooperation in these matters. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Very truly yours,

Terry Press

WIRED AGAIN

For those of you lamenting the sheer depth and variety of movie reviews we've had in the past – fear not! After spending the last 15 months of my life without it, we broke down and got cable today! Let the bad flicks begin!

When you get rid of cable, it's really no big loss. But then, a few months later, you start to miss it (the payments are another story). When you see cable at your friends' houses or in hotels, you start to get jealous.

Of course, once you get it back, what sucks about cable becomes painfully obvious immediately following hookup. Namely, no matter what time of the day you turn on MTV or VH-1, you won't see a music video. Heck on MTV, you'll be lucky to see anything music-related at all.

Years ago, E! Entertainment Television used to have a decent lineup (not to mention that Dagny Hultgreen ... *grrr*), but now it's nothing but tired beach-and-bikini shows. And A.J. Benza.

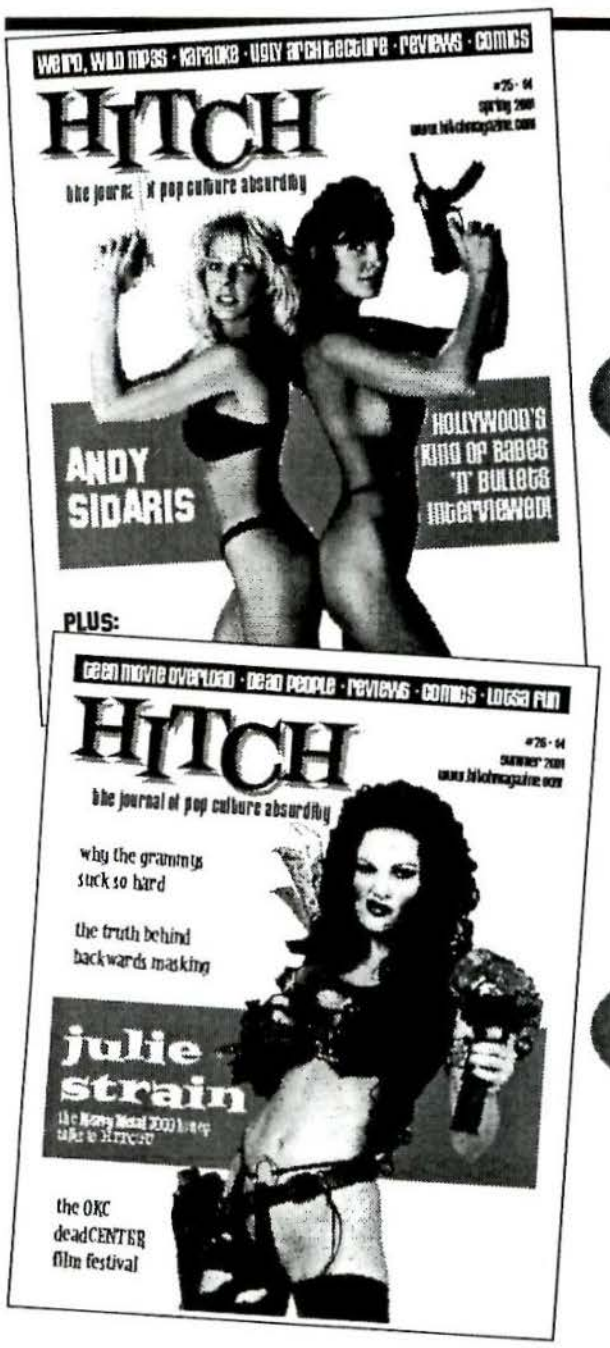
MUSUCK

As you can tell from the CD review section each month, we get a lot of promo discs here at **HITCH** HQ. As you can tell from the CD review section each month, not all of them are good. We recently held a "Not-So-Great CD Giveaway" online to unload some of the weaker discs.

The rules were simple: Tell us why you wanted them. Emerson Dameron of Athens, Geo. won, if such a word applies in such a contest. You can read his winning entry at left.

ANYTHING ELSE?

Nope, this space is about all filled up. I hope you enjoy this issue, and we'll see you again in November.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HITCH

#27 • FALL 2001

"The truth is, I practice absurdity quite religiously." —*Alfred Hitchcock*
"Freedom of speech is one thing; the word 'penis' is another." —*Phil Hartman*
"Comedy is not pretty." —*Steve Martin*

Editor-in-Chief / Publisher
Rod M. Lott

Wichita Bureau Chief
Ken Davis

Senior Editors
Ryun Patterson
Jamie Rogers
Joe Rogers
Chris Sharpe

Gracious Contributors
Louis Fowler
Harrison Lott
Malena Lott
Brian Winkeler
Richard York

Layout and Design
Rod M. Lott
Chris Sharpe

Online Manager
Rod M. Lott

Stapler
Chance Giffhorn

Cover Model
Aimen Wong

Dedicated to the Memory of
Jack Lemmon

Our Website
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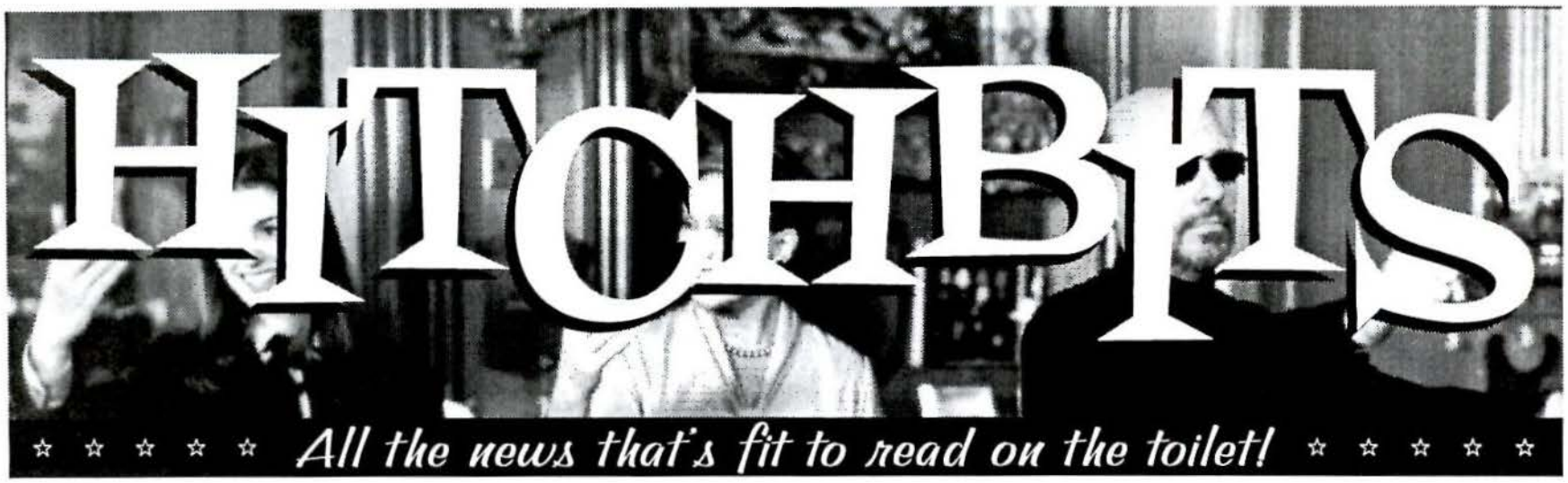


STUPID CELEBRITY QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"It's not about the money; it's about me being challenged in this role."

–Halle Berry, on the rumored $500,000 raise she got to go topless in Swordfish

"I usually like to walk around in a perpetual fog. I've been so shaken up lately that I can't even bring myself to smoke weed. It's been four days since I burned one."

–Woody Harrelson

"They put their faces on their paws and watch. Of course they know it's me. They only get to watch my show, because I turn off the television after it."

–Martha Stewart, on her cats and dogs

"You never know in this world what rings your bell. Now, that Heather Graham girl is fine. And that Jennifer Love Hewitt – that girl got booty for days. I love the way Nicole looked. If I saw her on that sidewalk right now, I'd pull over and hit on her. If she had a different head."

–O.J. Simpson, still busy searching

Ralph Macchio's career rests in my hands

Three times this year I have been among the few and the proud to receive tickets to attend a "Television Preview." At these exclusive events, hundreds of people gather in a meeting room at a local hotel to view and give their informed opinions on new TV shows … and the commercials that interrupt them.

The most recent preview was to be held on a Saturday night at a hotel on East Reno. I didn't go because it was held on a Saturday night at a hotel on East Reno. (If you find me spending time on East Reno on a Saturday night, either I've lost my way en route to Will Rogers World Airport or my breasts are on layaway.)

I failed to attend the other two sessions as well, because … well, because there's always some refrigerator that needs to be moved or weeds that require pulling. But I understand these "Television Previews" entail a circle of TV sets positioned in the middle of the room, around which sit rows and rows of uncomfortable plastic chairs, much like monkeys 'round the monolith. The doors shut, you watch an hour or so of TV, you leave.

It all sounds like a trick to me. I'm sure there's some *Village of the Damned* mind-control element at work behind closed doors that they just don't tell you about.

"Boy, that Tyne Daly is one firecracker of an actress, isn't she?" I imagine one might say upon exiting. "That show will be on the top of my viewing list come this fall, yessiree. Hey, what's this Amway thing I signed? And how did this UPC code get on my wrist? And, honey, why do you look like Katherine Ross at the end of *The Stepford Wives*? Don't get me wrong, I'm digging it, but *why?*"

Usually, when members of the public are solicited formally for their thoughts, they are justly compensated for their time, with a gift of $50 or so.

Except here. I guess they assume the chance to see crap before the rest of the country sees crap is payment enough. But they do offer "$250 in valuable prizes,"

according to the tickets, which I take to mean 250 lint brushes fell of the back of a truck somewhere.

The closest thing to this I have participated in was a recent deal where a telemarketer phoned me to ask if I would watch "a special broadcast" that night, after which they would call me to see what I thought. I said "sure," and she directed me to a cable station on that rarely explored, far end of the channel spectrum, between the Spanish network and the scrambled pay-per-view where, for a split second, you may discern nipple.

The program was anything but a "special broadcast." Rather, it was an unsold, half-hour comedy pilot starring Ralph Macchio as a writer. Five minutes – and five times as many bad jokes – into it, I switched it off, fairly certain that it wasn't going to make an abrupt, third-act turn into sitcom gold.

In my eyes, the prospect of Macchio as a scribe is a frightening one. Writers are supposed to have endured tragedies, weathered inscrutable turmoil and harbored personal demons that they unleash on the page. Macchio can't even grow facial hair.

Imagine if some of Macchio's other onscreen personas had aspired to the same expression of creativity:

▸ "See, Vinny said 'yewt,' but he meant 'youth' and so this judge is all like, 'Huh? What's a yewt?' That's just how my cousin talks, but we laughed anyway, which prob'ly wasn't such a hot idea, seeing as how we was on trial for murder and all."

▸ "I thought, 'Wax on? Wax off? What's up with this crazy old man?' I just wanted to kick people, y'know, like Pele kicks a soccer ball. Then I would be a man who would fight for your honor. I'd be a hero you're dreaming of."

▸ "Who's she kidding? I may be young, but I'm no stooge. I can see it in her eyes. Oh, yes, Joanie loves Chachi."

No sooner had a precious few minutes passed following the show's end when the telemarketer called back to quiz me.

"Sir, how would rate the show overall?" she asked. "Would you say that it was very funny, somewhat funny, somewhat not funny or not at all funny?"

"Not at all funny."

"Sir, how would rate the relationship between the writer, played by Ralph Macchio, and his ▸▸

Ralph Macchio's career (continued)

father? Would you say it was very enjoyable, somewhat enjoyable, somewhat not enjoyable or not at all enjoyable?"

"Not at all enjoyable."

"Sir, how likely would you be to watch this show if it were to become a weekly series? Would you say—"

"Not at all likely," I interrupted. "Never."

"Sir, please allow me to read the options first," she reprimanded, perhaps failing outright to see that a pattern was emerging. "Would you say very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely or very unlikely?"

"Hmmm…" I paused, just to throw her off. "Very unlikely."

Which, of course, translates to "Never in a million years."

—Rod Lott

Liked it the first time? Oh, just wait'll you see it *again!*

American Pie
Jim gets caught engaged in a sexual activity when his dad walks in his room.

American Pie 2
Jim gets caught engaged in a sexual activity when his dad walks in his dorm room.

The Lost World: Jurassic Park
Despite previous events, human beings return to the dinosaur island.

Jurassic Park III
Despite previous events, human beings return to the dinosaur island.

The Mummy
Evelyn's clumsiness results in one library shelf knocking over another, setting off a chain reaction until all shelves are down.

The Mummy Returns
Evelyn's son's clumsiness results in one pillar knocking over another, setting off a chain reaction until all pillars are down.

Rush Hour
"Can you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth?" Chris Tucker asks Jackie Chan.

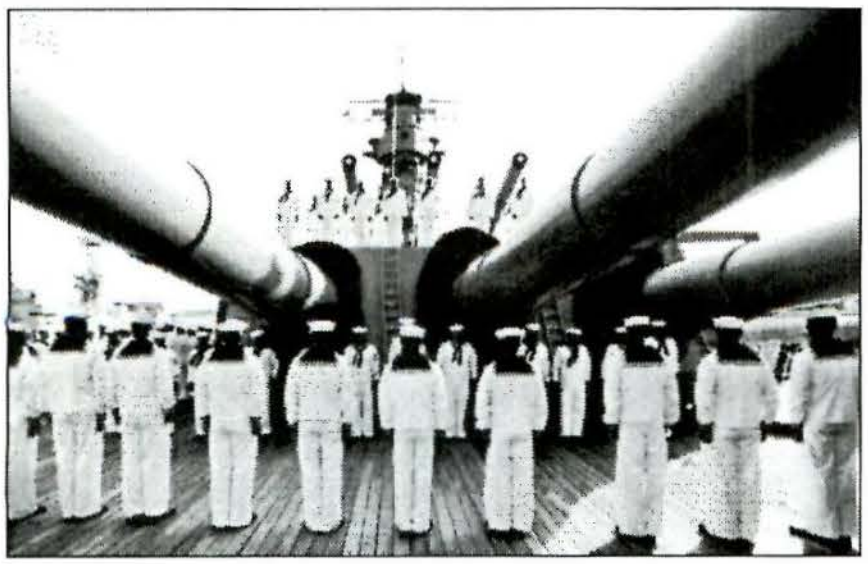
Rush Hour 2
"Can you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth?" Jackie Chan asks Chris Tucker.

Scary Movie
Cindy gets blown to the ceiling in a geyser of sperm when her boyfriend orgasms.

Scary Movie 2
Cindy gets blown against the wall in a geyser of sperm when her boyfriend orgasms.

—Rod Lott

Random Movie Stills of the Month



At left, Touchstone Pictures' **Pearl Harbor** ***offers Hollywood's most expensive phallic object of all time. At right, Martin Lawrence not only stars in MGM's comedy,*** **What's the Worst That Could Happen?**, ***but also sets the progress of his race back two solid decades.***

for "the real killers"

STUPID NON-CELEBRITY QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Hey, whaddaya think you're doin'! That's *my* game piece!"

—angry Taco Bell diner to his girlfriend

"And I ate some greasy pizza, then donated blood and got really sick."

—convenience store worker

"Why are you working anyway? Aren't we all supposed to be partying and remembering all the dead people?"

—drunk guy being arrested on Memorial Day

"Fuckin' awesome! *Blair Witch 2!*"

—a very excited teenage boy at Blockbuster Video

ENGLISH-CHALLENGED CELEBRITY QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"There is nothing more beautiful in the world, enough to lose one's head. A sunset with a long nose, a starry sky that lies, a river searching for its father, a beautiful blue forest. It makes you laugh, it makes you cry, it's very mean, generous, magical, universal, a picture of freedom, of unrestrained desire to live, of pain and joy, a joy so powerful and sweet that it restores the souls in every spot on earth. *Pinocchio*: nothing more beautiful in the world."

—Roberto Benigni

"*Rush Hour* in Asia isn't a success compared to my old Jackie Chan films. Not funny, the action isn't good. Bye-bye. Then just boom, a big hit and I just don't know what happened. Then I realized, oh, that's a very typical American film, very local. The dialogue was, 'What's up, nigger?' In Asia, the whole theatre goes 'huh?' In the United States, it's 'ha-ha' and everybody claps."

—Jackie Chan

THE WIT AND WISDOM OF HEFNER ROAD ANIMAL HOSPITAL

- "PAWS UP FOR MOM!"
- "WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN, THE BUFFALO IS EMPTY"
- "TICKA TICKA TICKA"
- "DOGS HAVE FAMILIES, CATS HAVE STAFF"
- "AVOID THE HEAT – SPAY"
- "A CAT'S JOB IS TO SIT AND BE ADMIRED"

CHURCH MARQUEE MESSAGES THAT MAKE ME WANT TO HURL

- "HATING IS LIKE DRINKING POISON AND WAITING FOR THE OTHER PERSON TO DIE!"
- "PREPARE FOR YOUR FINALS – STUDY THE BIBLE"

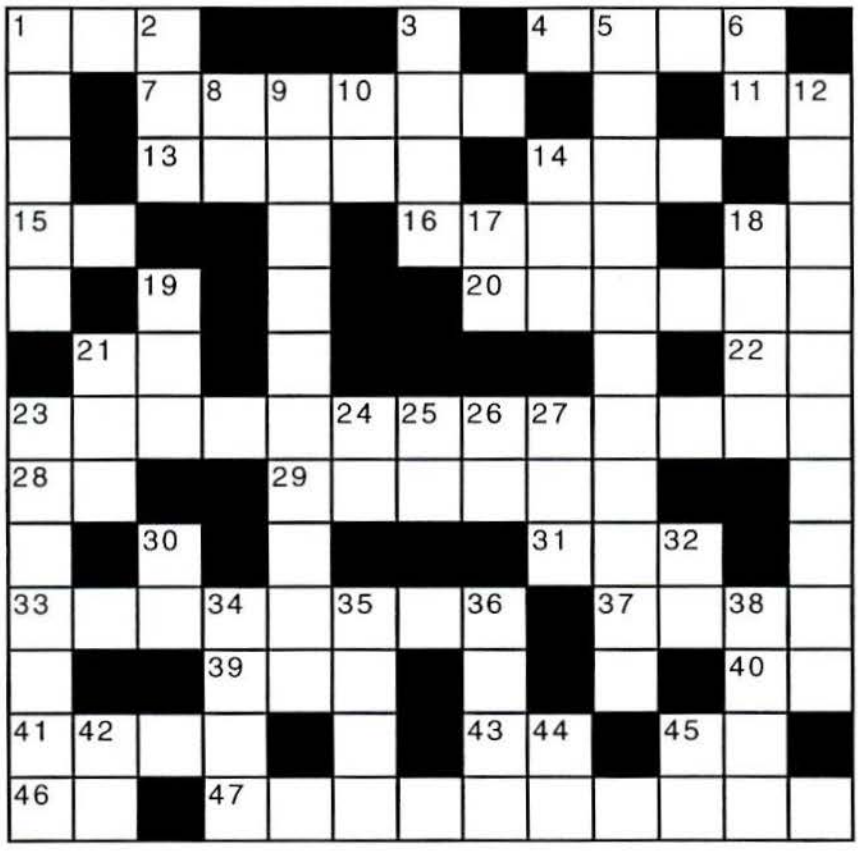
CHURCH MARQUEE MESSAGES THAT STRIKE ME AS SACRILEGIOUS

- "JESUS SPOKE SOFTLY AND CARRIED TWO BIG, REALLY HEAVY STICKS"

EVEN MORE THINGS WE'D WISH WOULD DISAPPEAR FROM THE MOVIES ALTOGETHER

- Scenes in which a pratfall-prone character accidentally knocks something over, thereby causing a chain reaction of things knocking over, for comedic effect.
- Scenes in which a character walks through a spooky place with his head turned only one way, and then as soon as he turns his head the other way like he should have all along, he immediately runs into someone/something quite scary.
- Soundtracks that burst into deafening levels of hardcore rap music when an action scene begins.

The HITCH *Crossword*



Across

1 And one day, they'll own you, too
4 Ass action
7 Saliva sphere
11 Often precedes "yours"
13 Has anyone in town *not* had her?
14 Once performed by Natalie Wood, Dennis Wilson, et al.
15 Retina-fryer
16 Fat hamburger spokesman and future heart attack victim
18 Reaction to *The Fast and the Furious*
20 Job of critics
21 Tony Danza's first sentence?
22 One of the Dakotas (abbrev.)
23 Real star of *Tomb Raider*
28 Reaction to CBS' *Big Brother 2*
29 Silver screen's newest talking ape
31 Uttered during sex
33 Supporting character in *Planet of the Apes*
37 Somewhere, there's a Trekkie who has named his child this
39 Overrated James Dean flick (abbrev.)
40 What it's all about, baby
41 Just how it felt like 43 Across lasted for
43 *Schindler's* missed
45 Reaction to 43 Across
46 MTV exclamation
47 What people get when they get stewed

Down

1 Needed by Senate
2 Went to DC when JFK went R.I.P.
3 Mr. C's garbage bag of choice
5 Hollywood's latest eligible bachelor!
6 How Germans spell "boo"
8 Unlimited underwear (abbrev.)
9 Star of *Swordfish*
10 So Anne Heche is this?
12 One to cross off the babysitting list
14 The hot Gabor sister
17 See 31 Across
18 The Katherine Hepburn of video games
19 Kubrick actor that gave a better performance than Kidman
21 See 17 Down
23 I don't trust guys with this name
24 Precedes "sir," but not in this language
25 I'll give you this one: JE
26 *Oz* to dyslexics
27 Reaction to news that Belinda Carlisle posed nude for *Playboy*
30 Big Apple greeting (abbrev.)
32 What two "H"s look like stacked on top of one another
34 What Gates will be always be, billionaire or not
35 Hick talk for urinating
36 What Eddie Murphy's career is not
38 Skunk love
42 Unimaginative narrative device (abbrev.)
44 Technology referenced on pg. 13 (abbrev.)
45 See 45 Across – yes, I'm that lazy

ANSWERS ON PG. 11

People in Need of a Good Kick to the Head

Kate Hudson ▲

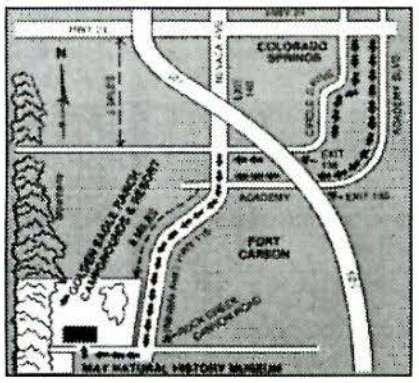
◀ *Elton John*

Oliver Stone ▶

Commit insect-icide at Colorado Springs' giant bug museum

Those with phobias related to creatures of the six- and eight-legged kind will want to steer clear of the May Natural History Museum of the Tropics in Colorado Springs, Colo. Others, however, will enjoy the out-of-the-way, makeshift memorial to the biggest-ass bugs that ever walked, crawled and squirmed the face of this planet.

Just 10 minutes away from I-25, the May National History Museum is more than 80 years in the making – a private, father-and-son collection of thousands upon thousands of dead insects and arachnids, all showcased for your bone-shivering excitement.



The "museum" is really just one room curtained off from the lobby/gift shop, but what a room it is! Within this virtual maze of display shelves, you'll find so many insects – each labeled with its name and country and date of capture – that it would take you several hours just to view each and every one.

Most noteworthy, however, are the hairy tarantulas that are bigger than your fucking hand. One of them is even chowing down on a hummingbird. You also shouldn't miss the female praying mantis making supper out of her mate, or the mama scorpion carrying many of her wee little ones on her back.

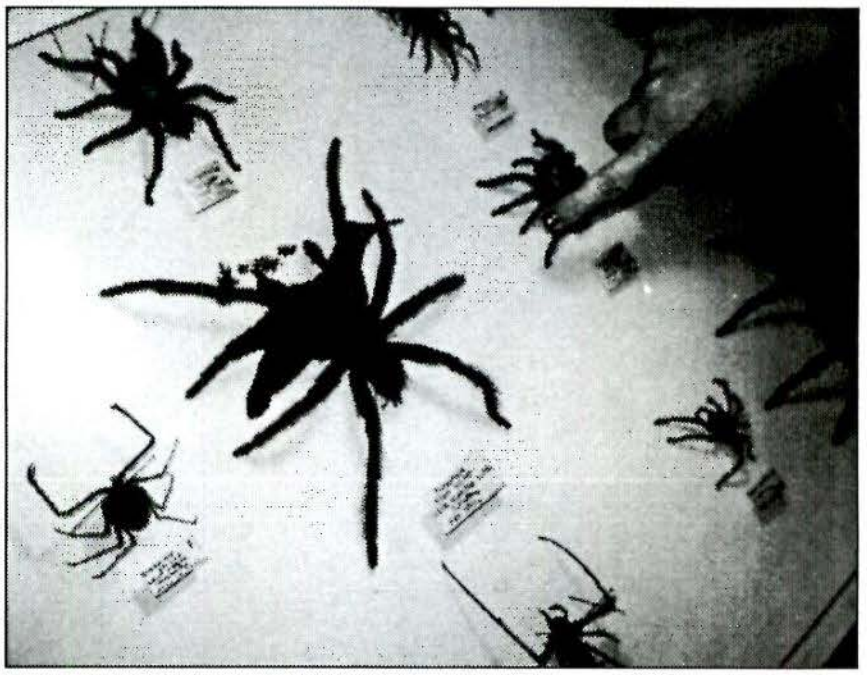
Although the entire exhibit is 100 percent deceased, the female visitors will fall for the ol' "it's alive" gag each and every time. The layout of the museum also encourages grabbing someone's ankles from the other side of a wall for heightened – albeit mean-spirited – comedy.

Half the fun.

Your mere $4 admission fee also grants you access to the adjoining "Space Museum," which is nothing more than three connected mobile homes filled with framed articles and photos about space exploration. You're betting off sticking with the bugs.

—Rod Lott

These sons-of-bitches may be behind glass, but if they moved, you'd be incontinent. This one's eatin' bird.

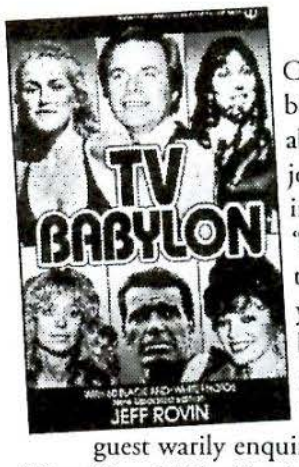


Know Your Knowles!

	NAME	JOB DESCRIPTION	AND I QUOTE...	WEAKNESSES	RECORDS SET	BIG BOOTY?
	Beyonce Knowles	Destiny's Child diva	*"I'm a survivor!"*	Style over substance, limited songwriting skills, attitude	Hit #1 on *Billboard* charts	Yes
	Harry Knowles	Ain't It Cool? News devil	"ME WANT PWESENTS!!!!!"	Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, ethics, hygiene	Took up two seats at theater	Yes

HITCH Condensed Books

This Month: *TV Babylon* by Jeff Rovin (1987, Signet)



(Joan Collins) beamed about the joys of having "mountains of young boy-flesh" to eat. ... When a guest warily enquired why (Tony) Randall had bothered to put on a nicely pressed shirt yet neglected to change his pajama bottoms, the actor shrugged and said, "I like to be comfortable. I also like to fuck, but I could only do one while you were here." ... (Paul Michael Glaser would thunder) off the set to huddle in a corner, yoga-style, asking partner (David) Soul for a heavy dose of support. "I'm down," he'd coo, "I'm scared, I don't know what the answers are. Hold me." ... Wayne Rogers once became so annoyed with (Gary) Burghoff on general principle that he tossed a chair at him. ... (Victorial Principal) adds that she got where she is by being "a black widow. Screw 'em and eat 'em."

Head-Scratching, Eyebrow-Raising Receipt Message of the Month

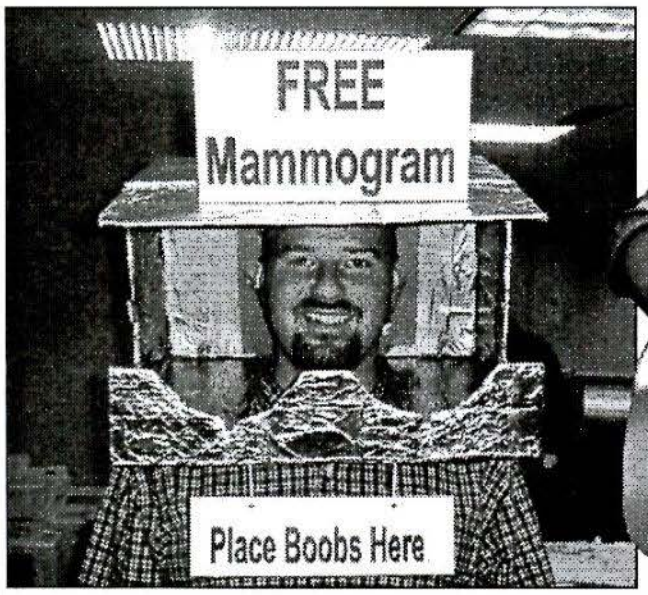
NE: LOTT/ROD

CUSTOMER COPY

05/19/2001 09:54AM

STINKY CHEESEMAN
Who is he?
What are his hobbies?
Why does he stink so bad?
Find Out May 26th.

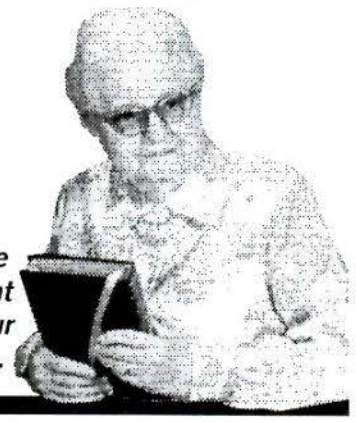
HITCH *Paparazzi*



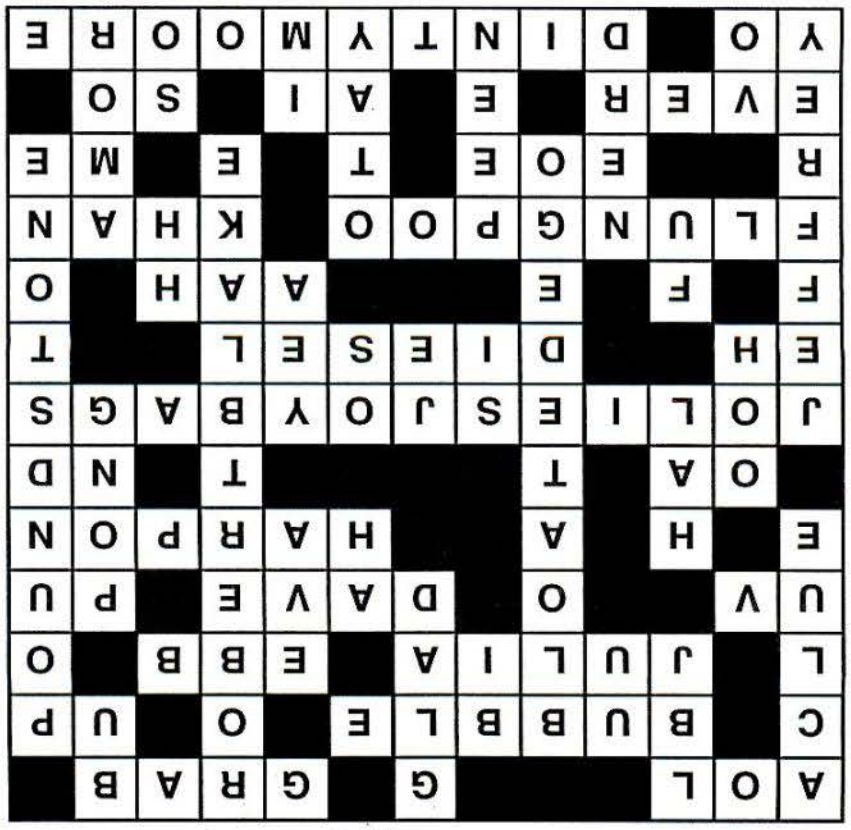
My initial reaction: What an idiot. Now: Gotta find some tin foil, a box...

Gorbachew.

Dave Matthews did it. He just did it during a song.



Thou shalt not have your photo taken at Wal-Mart with your bible.



The Robert Goulet
DEATH WATCH

"I'm gonna die when I'm 88; I got it all planned. I think 88's a good time to go and see the Lord. What the hell?"

Approximately 21 years and 2 months remaining

Milking cereal boxes for all they're worth

Next time you're enjoying your favorite breakfast cereal, take note of the company's pledge of consumer "help" via a toll-free phone number. Post Cereal even claims to offer "real help in real time."

While I'm not sure why *anyone* would need "help" regarding cereal, I invented a couple of unusual scenarios to test their customer service departments out.

CALL #1
Post Cereals
1-800-431-POST

Post: Thank you for calling Post Cereals. Your call may be monitored for quality assurance. To best serve you, could I have your name, please?

HITCH: Rod Lott.

Post: And your zip code?

HITCH: 73123.

Post: And how may I help you?

HITCH: I'm calling to register a complaint regarding Cocoa Pebbles.

Post: Okay. What seems to be the problem?

HITCH: On the cover of the box, it depicts what I think is a very violent situation with Fred Flintstone chasing Barney Rubble with a spoon, like he's going to hit him.

Post: Do you have this box in front of you?

HITCH: Only the front.

Post: How many ounces is that box?

HITCH: Uh … 13.

Post: And you don't have a date for that box?

HITCH: No. It's all over the shelves now, though.

Post: Is it Cocoa or Fruity?

HITCH: It's Cocoa. I don't know about Fruity. But I do know what makes the scene more violent is that you know all the Flintstones' utensils are made of rock. And that would really hurt.

Post: Right. That's true.

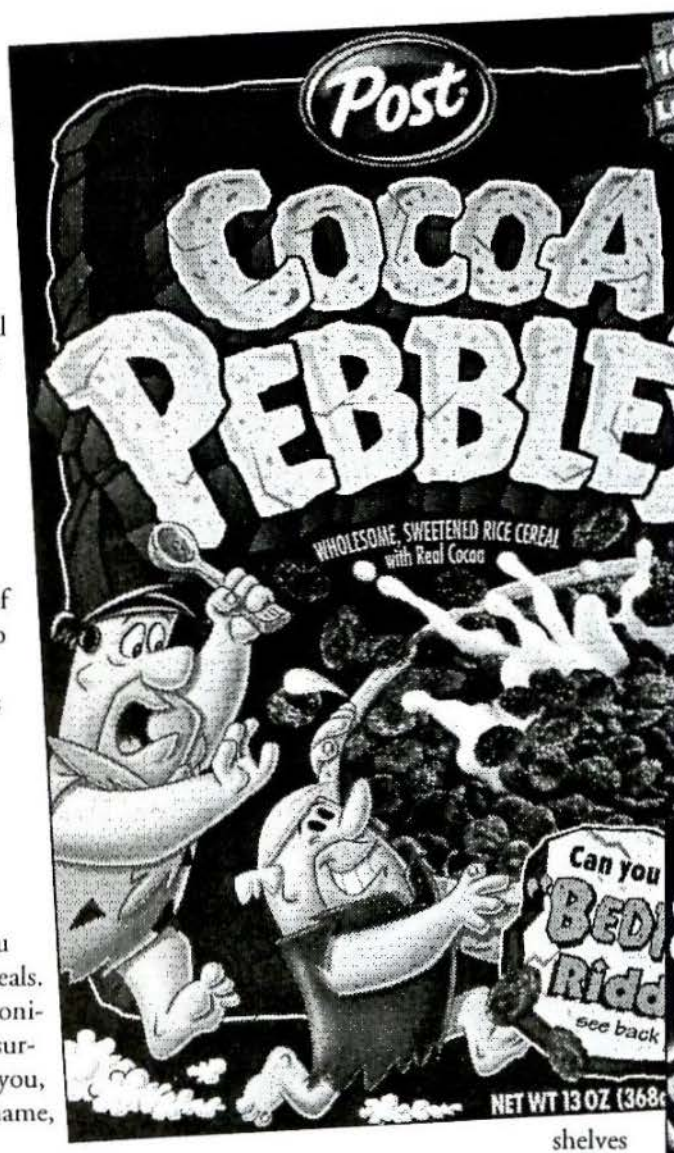
HITCH: Plus, it says it's a "wholesome" cereal, but I don't know what's so wholesome about hitting someone with a rock spoon.

Post: Sir, I am so sorry and I will let them know. I understand your point and perhaps they can look into changing that in the future. But without a date on the box, I don't really have any more information.

HITCH: That's okay.

Post: You have a nice evening.

HITCH: Thanks.



CALL #2
Kellogg Company
1-800-962-1413

Kellogg's: Thank you calling Kellogg's Consumer Affairs. This is Amy. How may I help you?

HITCH: I had a question regarding your Pokémon cereal.

Kellogg's: Okay. What is your question, sir?

HITCH: Well, I bought a box of the 13.2-ounce Pokémon cereal, and there's a character depicted on the front of the box that has my child disturbed.

Kellogg's: Which character is it?

HITCH: It says "Wobbuffet." Or maybe that's "Wobbuffét." I don't know; I don't speak French.

Kellogg's: What is it about the character that's bothering your child?

HITCH: It looks like he's in such distress or pain, like he's constipated.

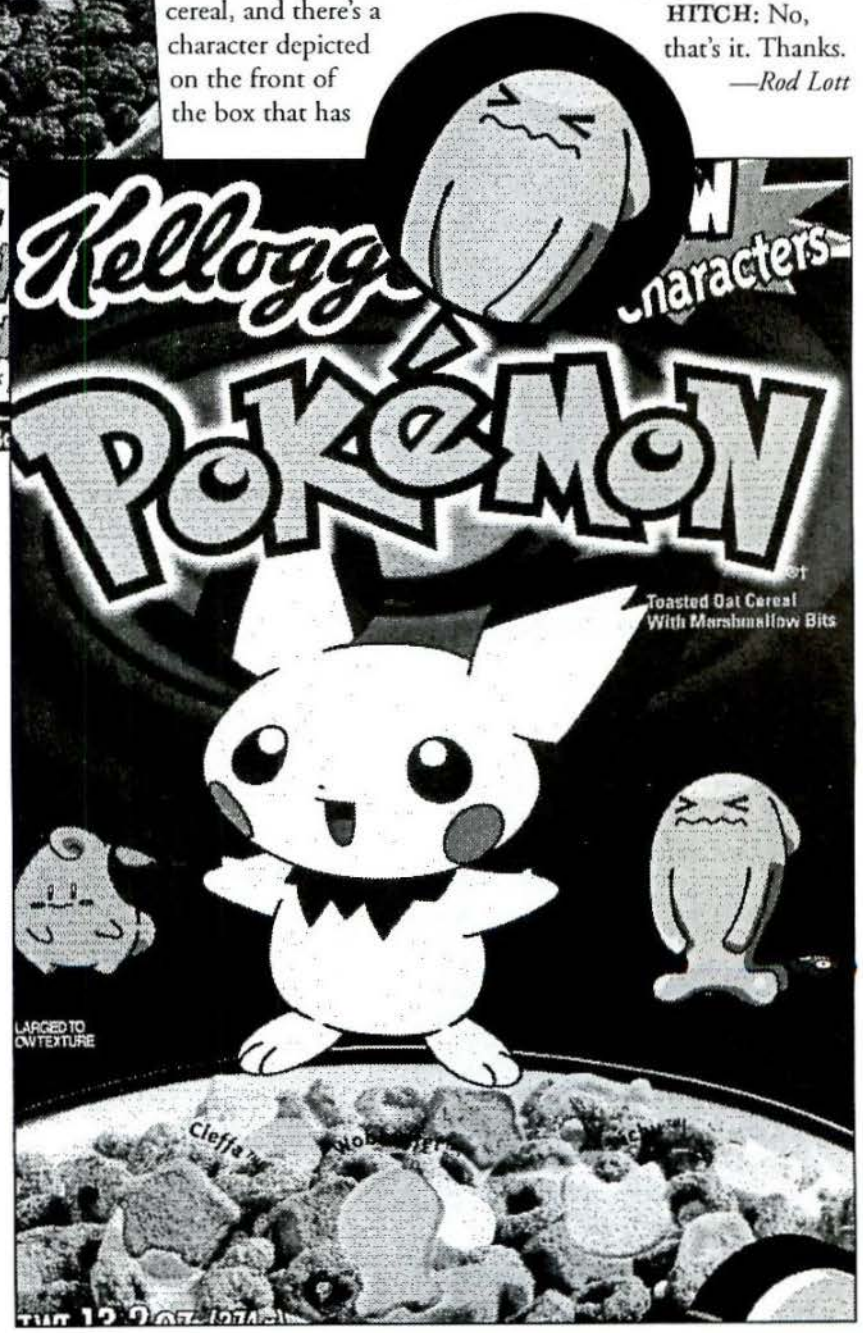
Kellogg's: I'll be happy to pass these comments on for you. Would you like to leave your name and address?

HITCH: No, that's okay.

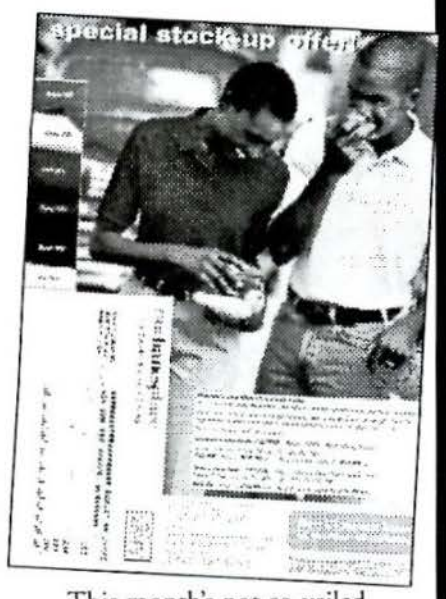
Kellogg's: I'll pass these on for you, sir. Anything else?

HITCH: No, that's it. Thanks.

—Rod Lott



Phallus in Wonderland



This month's not-so-veiled example of phallic imagery in advertising comes (no pun intended) to us from the One Hanes Place catalog.

Here a couple presumably enjoys vegetables, but really are engaged in sex play. Notice how the woman cups and fingers the "squash" as she uses her free hand to handle the two roundish "peppers." The look on the woman's face either suggests that she's pleased by the size of the "squash," or laughing at it.

Either way, the male sure is enjoying her touch, with the pleasure is so great he's forced to bite into a tomato for control. And hey, what's with that "finger"?

The Paper

PART FOUR OF A CONTINUING SAGA

DATELINE: July 21, 1993

Issue number four hit the stands (or the porches, to be accurate), and to me, the young assistant editor one month into his first post-graduate job, it felt like issue 40. Damn, did I hate this job.

Editor Lee's prized "Big Tomato Contest" was in full swing, so obviously this was nothing but Front Page Material. "Credible" and "newsworthy" the *South Oklahoma City Leader* was not.

More disturbing than the fact we had these old guys who reeked of potting soil lugging oversized beefstakes into our office was the fact that they had *named* their extra-large 'maters. "Better Boy," "Celebrity" and "Big Boy" were among the contestants, but leading the pack in week one of the contest was "Variety."

To me, they all looked like "Goiter."

My assignments for the week included interviewing a chipmunk-cheeked woman about her apple crisp recipe and conversing with the then-current Miss South Oklahoma City. I was looking forward to that assignment because, hey, a beauty queen, right? I should have known it was just another stupid assignment when she offered to meet me at Waffle House for the interview.

Her name was Lisa, and she told me that she won her coveted Miss South OKC crown by performing a dance to a Michael Bolton song.

"You can't turn your nose up at that, can you?" she asked.

Well, actually...

—Rod Lott

More mistaken identity instant messaging

Dare I ditch AOL Instant Messenger and risk accidentally getting into conversations with total strangers who think I'm someone else? Interaction is *so* hard to come by these days.

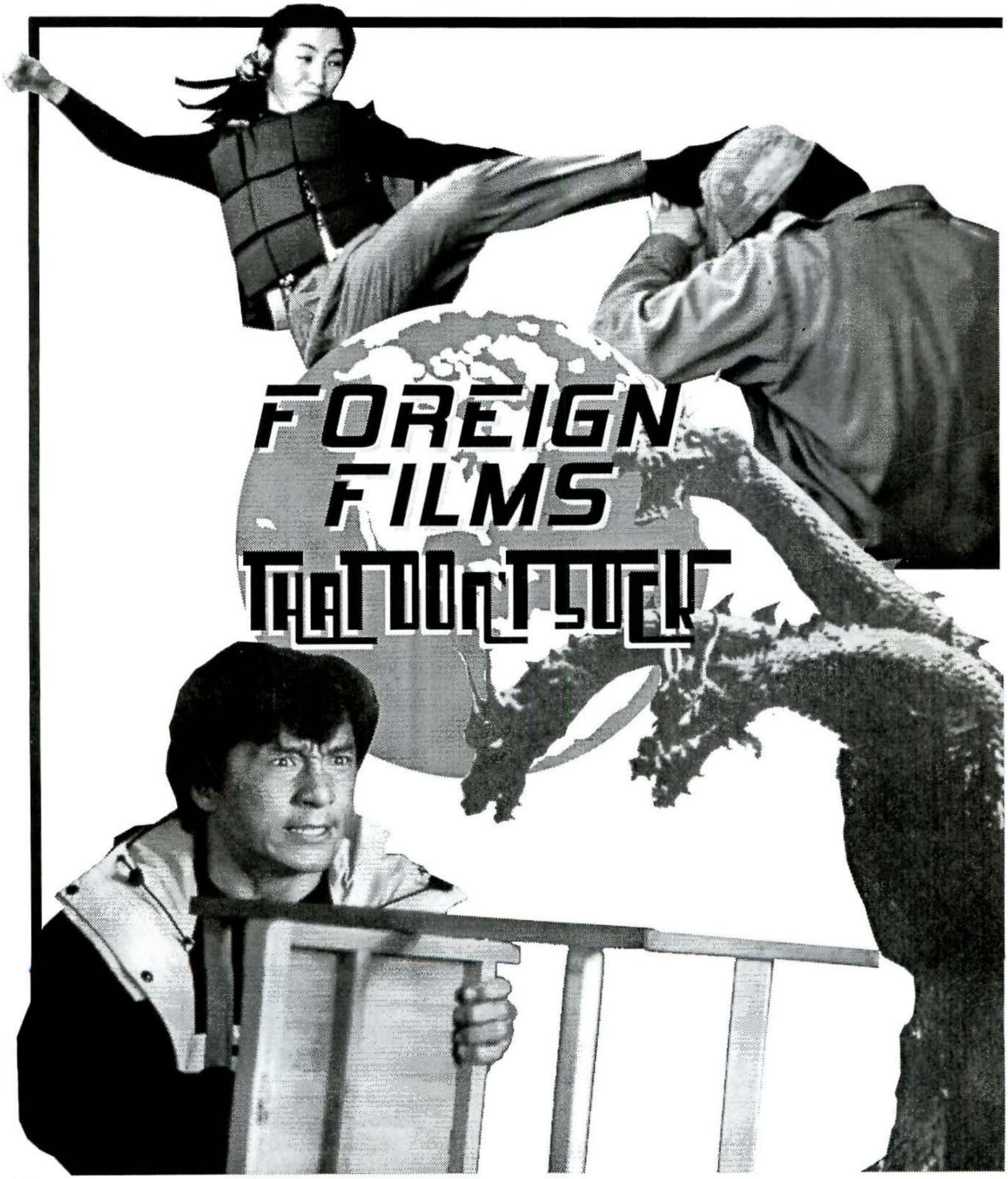
BigDaddy5984: Who is this?
RLott: You tell me.
BigDaddy5984: Is it Angela?
RLott: No.
BigDaddy5984: Heather?
RLott: No.
RLott: You have the wrong IM address.
BigDaddy5984: Angela's mom?
RLott: You have the wrong IM address.
BigDaddy5984: Angela's dad?
RLott: Angela's pimp.
BigDaddy5984: And who might that be?
RLott: Big Daddy.
BigDaddy5984: Hah hah
BigDaddy5984: Im just cracking up.
BigDaddy5984: How old are you?
RLott: None of your business.
BigDaddy5984: What is your name? Let me guess "puddin tame ask me again ill tell you the same
RLott: You got it.
BigDaddy5984: So.....
RLott: Ask me again.
BigDaddy5984: What?
BigDaddy5984: So.....
BigDaddy5984: What have you been up to latley? (I guess thats the only thing thst i can ask cause you wont tell anyone anything else
RLott: Why do you care what I've been up to if you don't know me?
BigDaddy5984: Well who are you
BigDaddy5984: i know your not puddin tame
BigDaddy5984: I
BigDaddy5984: Puudin Tame
BigDaddy5984: puddin*
BigDaddy5984: Why are you being like this???????
RLott: Like what?
BigDaddy5984: You wont tell anyone a thing
RLott: Because I don't know you and you don't know me.
BigDaddy5984: Your becoming very obnoxious
RLott: Good. Why should I tell you anything?
BigDaddy5984: Fuck you bitch
RLott: Wrong gender.
BigDaddy5984: are you a guy or girl?
RLott: Yes.
RLott: You should be able to figure that out from the above statement.
BigDaddy5984: well you are a bitch bye

Hlpolaris: Hi Roberta
RLott: Hi H1!
Hlpolaris: Do you know who this is???
RLott: No!
Hlpolaris: It is Jeanne.....I am at Deb's
RLott: Get out of here! You are not!
Hlpolaris: Yes I am!!! I am living here now. I am working in Okemos.
RLott: No! Tell me not!
Hlpolaris: What are you up to these days??
RLott: A lot of self-pleasuring, to be honest.
Hlpolaris: I think I have the wrong Rlott. Sorry :-)
RLott: :-) is right!

Looking for back issues?

Many are sold out, but we still have copies of the following issues for sale: #7, #8, #9, #10, #15, #23, #24, #25 and #26. Issues are $4 each. Some are in extremely limited quantities, so please e-mail us at *RLott@aol.com* to reserve. Consult *www.hitch-magazine.com* for contents of each issue. Also see our ad on pg. 31 of this issue.

Rules for qualification? *Easy:* No artsy-fartsy crap. Oh, and nothing from England or Canada. Man, there are a lot of great foreign films out there! This list – not intended to be exhaustive – is just a sampling. If you think it's heavily weighted on the Asian side, well, *duh!* That continent cranks these bastards out better than anyone else. Grab your video passport and let's tour the world – without leaving the couch!



ASIA

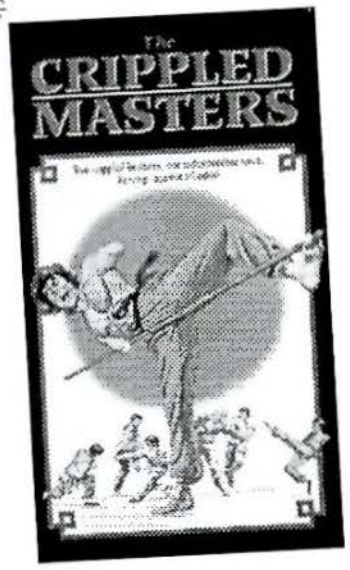
ALLEYCAT ROCK: SEX HUNTER (199?)

Set in 1970s Tokyo, this is the most swinging movie I've ever seen. A mixture of teenage counterculture travelogue, a Sergio Leone western and *Romeo and Juliet*, it involves a mean girl gang cruising London's night spots. One girl breaks away from the group and falls in love with a "half-breed," inspiring the gangs to kill off the town's "half-breeds" and traitor girls who love them. *–LF*

BLACK MASK (1996)

Hong Kong's answer to *Batman* casts Jet Li as part of a failed genetically altered squad of super sol-

diers. Li drops out, becomes a mild-mannered librarian by day and drug-cartel-fightin' superhero by night. This is perhaps as close to a living comic book as you can get, and far better than either of Joel Schumacher's *Batmans*. Ironically, Artisan's Americanization actually *improves* the film, allowing formerly bleak and dark scenes to finally shine and rightly kick ass. And Francoise Yip is one hot hitmama. *–RL*



THE CRIPPLED MASTERS (1982)

An evil warlord's underling is ordered to cut the arms of a guy. The armless man is taught to fight by a bald farmer. The warlord has his underling's legs burned with acid. The two cripples then forget past differences to become a lean, mean, fightin' machine – albeit one with all the good parking spaces. The one with no legs hops onto the back of the one with no arms and they kick major ass. *–RL*

CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON (2000)

Now that the hype has died down, you can re-examine Ang Lee's Oscar-winning epic for what is really is: *Great!* Though pretty serious, Lee doesn't skimp on the action, and

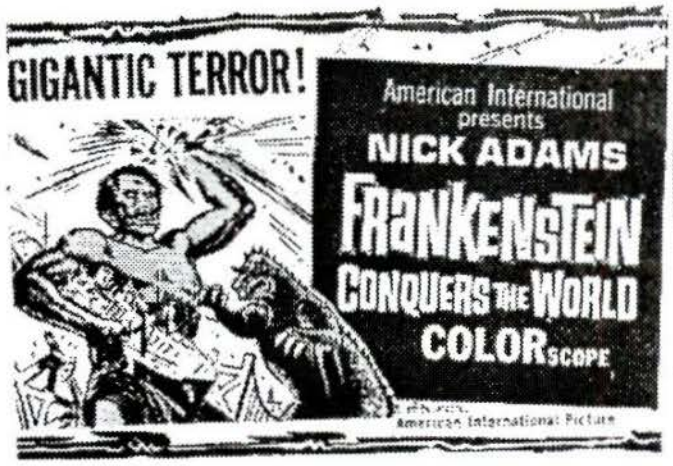
characters move, jump and fly in more exciting ways than any all-out Hong Kong blockbuster. That you care about the story as much as you do the spectacle is this film's greatest achievement. *–RL*

DETONATION! VIOLENT GAMES (199?)

Two Japanese biker gangs clearly do not like one another, in a crazed flick that plays like *West Side Story* on wheels. *West Side Story*, however, never had guys in Mohawks, wild sex, paint-sniffing nogoodniks or guys carving the words "SEWER RAT" into the back of a rival gang member. Not to mention repeated scenes of guys running over each other with their hogs. *–RL*

FISTS OF FURY (1971)

Bruce Lee's first starring role had him uncovering a murderous drug ring in the ice factory where he works. Because his character has sworn off fighting, those fists of fury don't become furious until the end, but when they do … *oh, boy!* The icehouse fight is good and bloody, though *Fists of Fury* is worth watching just to see Bruce battle the flying dogs. Yes, flying dogs. Personally, I think Lee is overrated, especially when you compare him to any of the Hong Kong superstars working today, but the man clearly paved the way, so he earns our respect. *–RL*



FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD (1965)

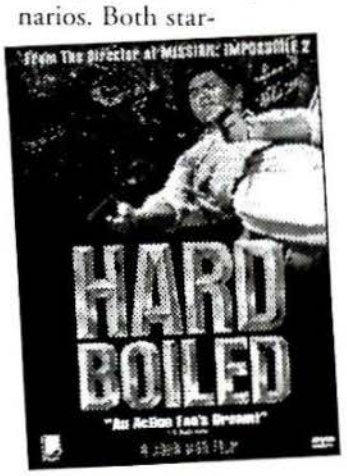
An incredibly silly Toho monster epic pitting the giant lizard Baragon (later to be seen in the all-star smash *Destroy All Monsters*) against Frankenstein. Well, not *really* Frankenstein, but a kid who ate the monster's heart (!) and grows into something at least vaguely resembling Frankenstein. He doesn't last, however, being felled in one ending by a giant octopus. *–RL*

GORATH (1964)

Just to prove that frequent *Godzilla* director Ishiro Honda wasn't *all* about men jumping around in rubber suits (okay, well, there is the matter of the giant walrus…), check out his space epic *Gorath*, wherein the planet Earth is threatened by a falling star. Honda plays things serious, resulting in more drama than Bay/Bruckheimer's *Armageddon* could muster at twice the length. *–RL*

HARD-BOILED (1992) THE KILLER (1989)

It's fitting that these two films can be bought together on DVD in the *John Woo Collection* from Fox Lorber: They represent Woo's two best films from his Hong Kong days. *The Killer* is the better film, but the over-the-top action scenes of *Hard-Boiled* override the dopey dialogue and unlikely scenarios. Both star-



ring the inimitable and impossibly suave Chow Yun-Fat, this collection highlights Woo's greatest talent; making celluloid action exciting again. *–RY*

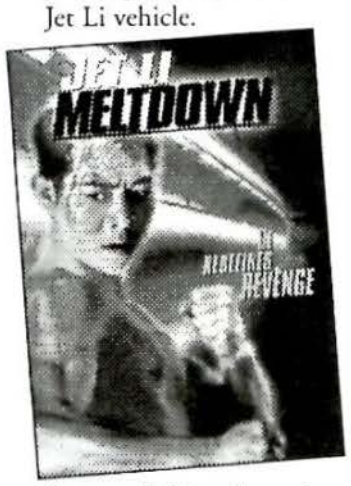
THE HEROIC TRIO (1992)

Michelle Yeoh, Anita Mui and Maggie Cheung star as Invisible Woman, Wonder Woman and Thief Catcher – a team of Hong Kong superheroines out to retrieve a bunch of

stolen babies. Visually exciting and with lots of wire work, it was good enough to warrant a sequel, 1993's *Executioners*. *–RL*

HIGH RISK (1995)

No American movie would dare open with a busload of children blowing up, so for that alone, you've gotta respect this Jet Li vehicle.



But good thing the action never stops, as Li plays bodyguard/stunt double to a Jackie Chan-esque superstar who finds his life in danger during a terrorist takeover of a hotel holding an exhibit for Russian jewels. If it sounds like *Die Hard*, you're right, but way more violent, way more funny and with the added bonus of snakes. You can find it in its Americanized version as *Meltdown*. *–RL*

THE INVINCIBLE SPACE STREAKER (1988)

This spaceless, streakerless Japanese movie features a creepy doctor who turns oft-nude schoolboys into monkeys, pigs and the occasional superhero. One kid thwarts the doc's plans by peeing on his face. The boys frolic nude in a pool often. It is unlike anything you have ever seen ... at least we *hope* you don't see naked Japanese schoolboys all the time. *–RL*

KEIKO MASK (1993)

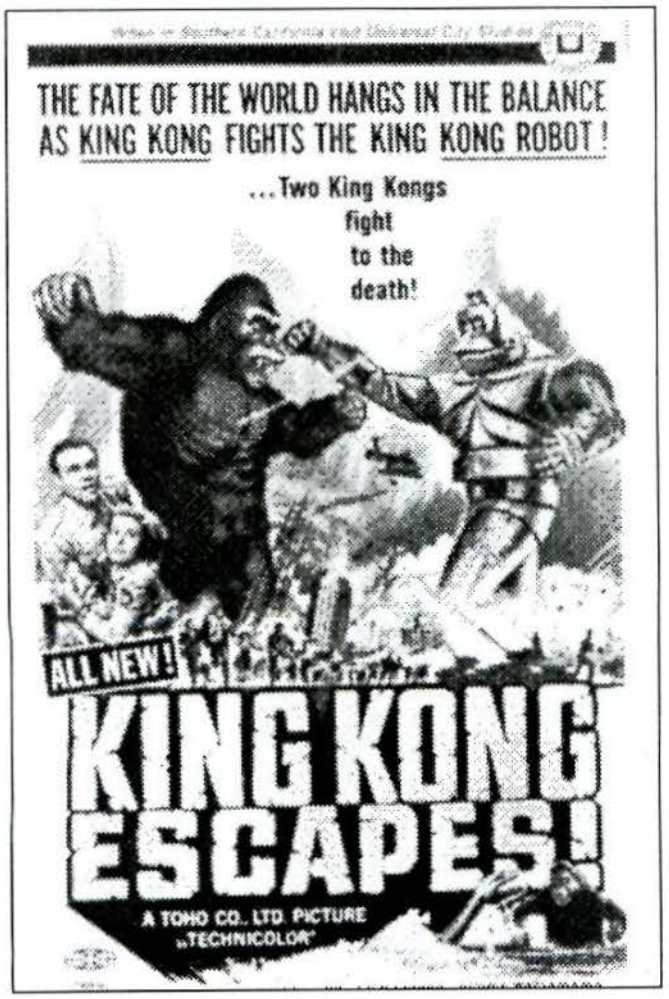
The best superhero ever put to celluloid, *Keiko Mask* – clad only in red boots, mask and cape – defends constantly tortured students with a pair of numbchucks and her vagina. Yes, her vagina. *–LF*

THE KILLER SNAKES (1975)

A complete nerd learns how to train snakes to exact revenge on his many, many tormenters in this Shaw Brothers sickie. Watch as he penetrates a whore with one of his serpent pals! You'll never pay for sex again! *–RL*

KING KONG ESCAPES (1968)

King Kong – or at least Japan's version – is awakened to fight Mechakong, a metallic gorilla created by Dr. Who (not *that* one). From there, it's every ape for himself, concluding in a massive battle atop a tower. This was a semi-sequel to *King Kong vs. Godzilla*, and almost as good. *–RL*


THE FATE OF THE WORLD HANGS IN THE BALANCE AS KING KONG FIGHTS THE KING KONG ROBOT!
...Two King Kongs fight to the death!
ALL NEW!
KING KONG ESCAPES!
A TOHO CO., LTD. PICTURE
"TECHNICOLOR"

KWAIDAN (1964)

It's *Tales from the Crypt* with samurais, Geisha girls and faces in cups of tea, as four supernatural tales – based on Japanese folk legends – unfold. Highly atmospheric and more than a little unsettling, *Kwaidan* gets its points across with not a lot of dialogue but just enough blood. *–RL*

THE LAST DAYS OF PLANET EARTH (1974)

When it comes to destroying the Earth, leave it to the Japanese to give us the most fucked-up vision of total destruction imaginable. Loosely based on the prophecies of Nostradamus, we learn that signs of the end times include an army of gigantic killer slugs, mutated bats, children who can fly and weather so hot that you catch on fire when you step outside. This all leads up to the final image that gave me nightmares for two weeks: two deformed mutant children fighting over a snake to eat. *Yipes! –LF*

MAJIN, THE MONSTER OF TERROR (1966)

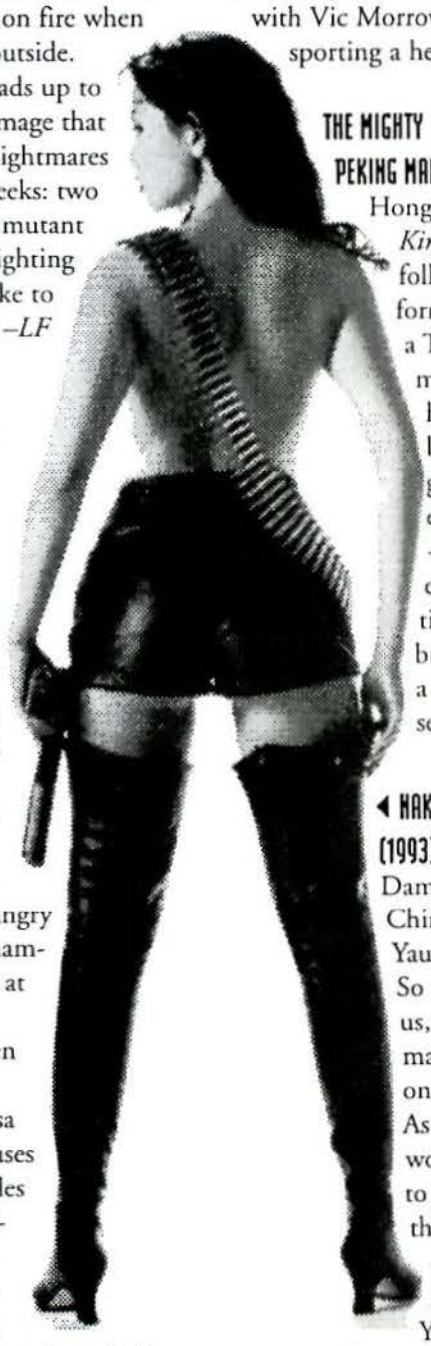
One of Japan's post-*Godzilla* monsters, Majin is a giant mountain god that comes to life after angry villagers hammer away at his head. Majin then destroys many balsa wood houses and impales many citizens. You shouldn't fuck with giant mountain gods, but did anyone listen? No; a couple of sequels followed. *–RL*

MESSAGE FROM SPACE (1978)

Japan's answer to *Star Wars* has a once-peaceful planet taken over by an evil, cloaked emperor in kabuki makeup. An elder statesmen throws a bunch of glowing walnuts into the air. That's about all the sense it made, but spaceships are flows, rayguns are shot, meteors are dodged and disco music played. Sonny Chiba (*Street Fighter*) stars along with Vic Morrow, here sporting a head. *–RL*

THE MIGHTY PEKING MAN (1977)

Hong Kong's *King Kong* follows the formula to a T: giant monkey + hot blonde + greedy explorers + public exhibition + tall building = a must-see! *–RL*



◀ NAKED KILLER (1993)

Damn, Chingmy Yau is hot! So lucky for us, she makes good on the title. As a woman out to avenge the death of her father, Yau is groomed to be an assassin-for-hire by middle-aged manhater Sister Cindy. Amidst all the disembodied heads and mutilated male genitalia, a queasy-stomached and impotent cop (Simon Yam) falls in love with her. Seeking to keep that relationship from progressing is a pair

of lesbian hitwomen. "Wild" isn't *quite* the word for this one. –*RL*

RING (1998)

I watch horror films all the time. But very few have ever creeped me out more than *Ring*, a Japanese, urban legend-type film whose terror level exceeds anything in the last 20 years. It's about a mysterious videotape that's getting passed around. Those who watch it get an immediate, cryptic phone call and then die a week later. It's the ultimate gimmick film that works on just about every level. (See the full-length review in this issue's "DVDemented!") –*RY*

SHOCKING ASIA (1975)

Tame by today's standards, this seedy mondo movie is not to be missed. Midgets, penis parades and sex change operations galore, plus illegal turtle hunting and a trip through a Vietnamese meat market. Funny and disturbing. –*LF*

THE 6 ULTRA BROTHERS VS. THE MONSTER ARMY (1974)

A great solar disturbance unleashes a horde of rubber-suited Japanese monsters in this pseudo-psychedelic offering. The gods turn a boy into some sort of power monkey pugilist, who joins forces with the Ultra Brothers (Ultraman knock-offs) to kick monster ass. There's a flying Buddha head, some beheaded beasts and a whole lotta cartwheels. –*RL*

TETSUO THE IRON MAN (1988)

The first movie to feature a giant robot-like penis, but certainly not the last (that honors goes to the sequel, *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer*), *Tetsuo* traces the not-oft-publicized travails of having shards of metal protrude from your body at the most inconvenient times. –*RL*

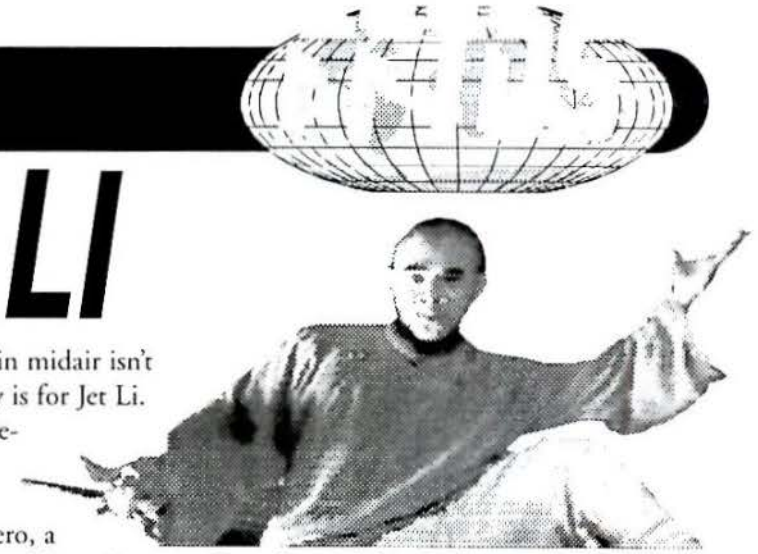
WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS (1967)

A sequel to *Frankenstein Conquers the World*, Toho's *War* depicts an epic battle between a tall, brown ape-like creature and a tall, *green* ape-like creature. Russ Tamblyn is the American scientist called in to end this ferocious fight. Don't miss the scene where a woman warbles the non-hit "The Words Get Stuck in My Throat." –*RL*

ZERAM (1991)

Either this latter-day Japanese effort is a bad movie or a self-knowing

JET LI



Kicking people 12 times in midair isn't for everyone. But it definitely is for Jet Li.

Hands down the best wire-work performer in the business, Li made his mark in Hong Kong as a legendary hero, a man among men. But he's humble, polite and even shy at times, unless it comes to knockin' some bad-guy heads. He's made a ton of movies, and here are some of the best.

Hands down the best of the series, ***Once Upon a Time in China 2*** (1992) pits our hero Wong Fei Hung, his trusty sidekick and his "aunt" against rival factions that threaten to divide China. Oh, yeah, and he helps out Sun Yat Sen, too. Not focusing so much on fighting imperialist outsiders but on inter-China strife, No. *2* (heh heh) weaves a perfect mix of drama, pacing and way kick-ass kung-fu action that is tightly held together by a haunting score.

(Interesting sidenote: You can hear a techno version of the *OUATIC* main theme backed by a techno beat at any of the high-priced Chinese-run clubs in Phnom Penh. Everyone knows the song and loves it.)

An especially pleasing nugget of brutality comes when Fei Hung has to beat the crap out of a bad guy who wields an especially deadly piece of wet cloth. *Snap!* Kudos to Tsui Hark and Jet Li once again.

Once Upon a Time in China 3 (1993) might have been a better movie without being a sequel, because with so much to live up to, *OUATIC3* would have had to be mind-boggling to quench the kung-fu thirst of fans of the first two films.

No. *3* is merely great. The theme this time around is lion dancing, and there are some great lion dances in the film, using the best wire-work stuntmen action films can buy. The plot is rather bare, however, and holds none of the emotional weight of the first two films. Just so you know, the white guys did it. (They're Russian, though, so suck on that, *comrade*.)

Once Upon a Time in China and America (1997) is like Jet Li meets David Carradine. It's kind of extremely average and predictable. You've all seen that Jackie Chan western, so you know what there is. Stagecoaches, hangings, etc. Tsui Hark missed the boat on this one. The series continues after this one, but without Jet Li, so our attention must turn elsewhere.

In 1993's ***Twin Warriors***, Mr. Li is a Shaolin monk thrown out of the temple because of the actions of his best friend. While they both try to make it on the outside, the friends go their separate ways: Jet falls in with Michelle Yeoh and some rebels because it's the right thing to do, and his friend gets in cahoots with the local warlord/governor. This all spells showdown, but not before Jet goes insane and must master the forces of Tai Chi to gain the ultimate power. Funny, with almost non-stop action, this is an overlooked, but good film. It's part of Dimension's Jet Li DVD boxed set, along with *The Enforcer* and *Fist of Legend*, and definitely worth breaking open the piggy bank for.

The Defender (2000) is kind of like Kevin Costner's *The Bodyguard*, except with Jet Li and a really hot chick. Okay, not like *The Bodyguard*. Anyway, the aforementioned fine lady is in trouble with the mob; so much trouble, in fact, that they want to ... *kill her!* There aren't any bodyguards good enough in Hong Kong, so the new bodyguard comes from an elite Chinese military bodyguard unit, and he does *not* brook any tomfoolery when he's out to guard a body.

Although his no-nonsense Chinese demeanor is at first frustrating to the jaded Western imperialist bodyguardee, she starts to see that it's because he really cares. Meanwhile, he kills lots of people and has a showdown with an elite member of a Chinese military assassin squad, and has a cool shootout in a shopping mall. But it's really a love story – a metaphor for what

could be between Hong Kong and the motherland – flying kicks and all.

Our main character in 1995's ***The Enforcer*** is an undercover Chinese cop with strong kung fu. Enter his 6-year-old son, whose kung fu is also most impressive. That adds up to excitement, no matter how you slice it, but with a tender side. You see, Jet Li's son doesn't know his dad is undercover, so he thinks his dad is a criminal. Li goes to do crime stuff in Hong Kong, and bad things happen that eventually force his son to find him in Hong Kong, where they bust out Shaolin-style and let the criminals know who their daddy is.

Fist of Legend (1997) is another remake of Bruce Lee's *Fists of Fury*, the best pure chopsocky movie ever made. *Fist of Legend* will show every nonbeliever the glory of kung fu. Maybe it isn't so character-driven as *Sense and Sensibility* or with as good a soundtrack as *Once Upon a Time in China 2*, but *goddamn!* This movie is superlative.

Basic plot: Chinese student studying in Japan finds out his teacher has died. He returns to find a China different than he knew it. His master's son, who is like a brother to him, is trying to run the kung fu school as well as he can, but can't keep up with Jet Li, especially since Jet has learned some new moves in the Land of the Rising Sun, so they have a really cool fight with backflips and no-shadow kicks and such. The Japanese have a strong military presence in Jet's hometown, and they are led by a mean general. It turns out the Japanese actually poisoned their master, so Jet must have revenge. Many Japanese are fought and defeated.

Jet is accused of murder and stands trial. His sweetheart from Japan meets up with him, only to discover racial hatred. Jet fights his girlfriend's uncle. Jet fights a bunch of Japanese people. Jet fights the general. Trees are broken. Jet whips the general with his belt. Game over.

Fist of Legend doesn't try to be anything that it isn't, folks. It, like Jet Li himself, is just the best of its kind.

—Ryun Patterson

australia & new zealand

DEAD ALIVE (1992)

When I was in 9th grade, my brother and I rented this and after our mother walked by right in the middle of the scene where the main character is ripping apart zombies with a lawnmower, she became visibly nauseous. *Dead Alive* – also known as *Braindead* – *is* the greatest zombie film ever made and quite possibly *homage* to old-fashioned Godzilla-type flicks with a dash of *Ultraman* tossed in for good measure. Given that something is lost in the translation, I'm really unsure, but it's fun to watch either way. The monster in this one, Zeram, looks like a tree trunk with a baby face in the middle of it, and it's being chased by a female bounty hunter.

one of the goriest. But it is more in the vein of an *Evil Dead* film, as it's a horror comedy that is funny as hell. Peter Jackson (*Bad Taste*, *Meet the Feebles*) is a wonderfully talented genius that has yet to be discovered by a mass audience. *–LF*

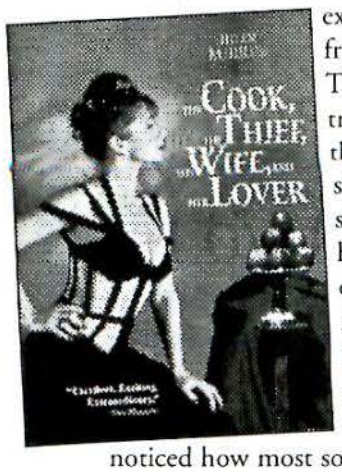
MAD MAX (1979)

Contrary to popular belief, *Mad Max* was not the first desert wasteland apocalyptic film, but it remains the best. Max (Mel Gibson) is a cop in the near future as society is on the verge of

5 FOREIGN FILMS THAT DO SUCK OH-SO-BAD

8 1/2 – An overrated, pretentious excuse for a film. Taught a generation of filmmakers that if they really don't have an idea for a film, just throw together jumbled Freudian symbols and Christ metaphors on black and white film stock, and it's automatically an art film.

The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover – There is just no excuse for this overlong exercise in annoyance from Peter Greenaway. The constant soundtrack begs one to turn the volume off and the shrill voices of every single character doesn't help matters any. The ending is horrific, not for its cannibalism, but for its sheer ineptitude. This was also the first film where I noticed how most so-called film critics and cinephiles name-drop this title in their attempt to sound smarter than you.



Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown – For the most part, I like Almodovar, but *Women* is long, talky, unfunny and just plain boring. The scenes that try to shock come off forced and the characters are so cardboard that you expect them to tip over.

Last Tango in Paris – Watching Marlon Brando sodomize Maria Schneider with his fingers and a stick of butter is about as erotic as Camryn Manheim in rubber underwear and nipple clamps eating fried calamari on a waterbed, i.e. not very. The historically overrated and not-very-good Brando (in the midst of whaling up) overacts like a high-school drama student and the erotic sensibilities are laughable to the point of where you wonder if it was all intentional.

Dancer in the Dark –My main problem with this Lars von Trier film lies with that Chinese-looking elf with Down's syndrome, Bjork. She is the most untalented, unwatchable individual I have ever seen in my life, Yahoo Serious included. Is there something wrong with her? I mean, did you *see* that duck thing see wore to the Oscars? Her performance, if it can be called that, is unintentionally hilarious and the music is pure whiny, whispery crap.

—Louis Fowler

breaking down and gasoline is the most coveted resource. Vehicular gangs are becoming the norm, mowing over all in their path. Brutal, relentless and slowly becoming prophetic, *Mad Max* (and its excellent sequel, *The Road Warrior*) is one of the greatest sci-fi films of all time. *–LF*

ONCE WERE WARRIORS (1994)

Unflinchingly realistic look at the life of modern day Maori of New Zealand. Powerful, gripping and incredible. *–LF*

RAZORBACK (1984)

There's a big-ass boar on the loose and he's eating everything in sight. From Russell Mulcahy, the director of *Highlander* and *The Shadow*. *–LF*

FRANCE

ASTERIX AND OBELIX VS. CAESAR (1999)

From the long-running comics come the wacky adventures of Asterix. Starring Roberto Benigni, Gerard Depardieu and the fabulous, magnificent bosom of Victoria's Secret model Laetitia Casta. *–RL*

BAXTER (1988)

A dark comedy about a pit-bull terrier with a mind of his own. He causes an accident to off his boring elderly owner, and gets murder on the mind when his new owners have a baby. As if pit bulls weren't freaky enough. *–RL*

BROTHERHOOD OF THE WOLF (2001)

Straight-to-video action hero Mark Dacascos (*Drive*) and ooh-la-la Monica Bellucci (*Malena*) star in this period piece-cum-werewolf thriller. It's based on the French legend of a giant wolf-like monster that supposedly slaughtered hundreds of people during the 18th century. King Louis XV calls in some wolfbusters to kick some wolf ass. *–RL*

CITY OF LOST CHILDREN (1995)

A visually imaginative and dreamlike film, *City of Lost Children* is about a scientist who kidnaps children in order to steal their dreams, as he is unable to dream on his own. Fans of Tim Burton would get into this, one of two films that knows what to do with Ron Perlman (the other is *Cronos*). Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, whose Hollywood career began and apparently ended with *Alien Resurrection*. *–RL*

EMMANUELLE (1974)

The film that started a series of six films (at least officially) and untold millions of hard-ons. Sylvia Kristel stars as Emmanuelle, a model who – let's just put it simply – likes sex. Originally rated X, this is what our fathers watched on the early days of cable while we slept on school nights. Today, you can stay up and watch Krista Allen get it on in *Emmanuelle in Space*. Some things never change. *–RL*

LA FEMME NIKITA (1990)

Forget the terrible John Badham/Bridget Fonda remake (*Point of No Return*) and the cheesy USA cable series. Luc Besson's thriller is the real deal: A balls-out action movie about a female government assassin that's as angry as she is sexy. Anne Parillaud plays Nikita, and has never done anything this good since. The same could be said for Beeson, whose movies of late (*The Fifth Element*, in particular) have been excruciating and Millaized. But his work here is cool and influential. *–RL*

MAN BITES DOG (1992)

Gritty, raw and shot in black-and-white, *Man Bites Dog* follows a camera crew that follows around a low-life criminals as he goes about his daily routine of killing. Eventually, the members of the crew start aiding and abetting. Yes, of course it's a comedy. *–RL*

TROUBLE EVERY DAY (2000)

A controversial entry at this year's Cannes, *Trouble Every Day* stars everyone's favorite unwashed indie actor Vincent Gallo as a cannibal who eats women's vaginas. *Betty Blue*'s Beatrice Dalle also is no stranger to the pleasures of the flesh - both sexually and gastronomically. They screw, they eat. At one point, Dalle walks around a gored-out house with pieces of, um, meat still sticking to her face. *–RL*

UN CHIEN ANDALOU (1929)

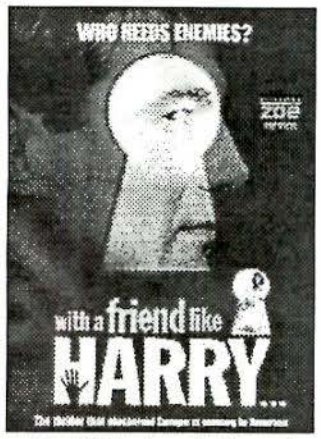
Okay, yeah, so this 17-minute arty and experimental short from Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali is the very definition of pretentious. But we're including it because it contains the screen's all-time greatest gross-out, a close-up of an eye being sliced by a knife. Who knew peepers were so damn goopy? *–RL*

THE VANISHING (1993)

George Sluzier's psychological thriller worked so well, Fox hired him to remake it with Jeff Bridges, Kiefer Sutherland and Sandra Bullock. It sucked. But the original, while no work of art, is worth watching, as an Everyman's desperate search for his missing girlfriend leads him to a crazed, chemistry teacher-cum-kidnapper and possibly the most bleak, uncompromising ending you'll ever see. *–RL*

WITH A FRIEND LIKE HARRY... (2000)

With a Friend Like Harry... is the bastard offspring of *What About Bob?* and *Shallow Grave*. I'm not entirely sure why the French went apeshit over it (nine César noms, four wins), but it's a solid, unpredictable, morbidly funny thriller about childhood obsesssion and thirtysomething domestic malaise. The structure and



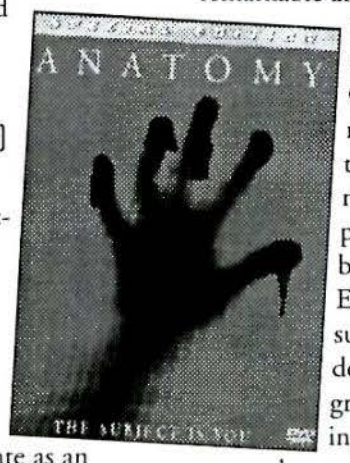
style of Hitchcock flows in its veins, but it's taken a hit or two of good ol' David Lynch, especially in the unsettling sound effects and lingering shots. It stays with you for a few days after viewing, and reveals itself to be much a funnier film than you'd originally thought. *–BW*

GERMANY

AGUIRRE: THE WRATH OF GOD (1972)

Werner Herzog's maddening and gritty masterpiece tells the story of a crazed Spaniard (the maniacal Klaus Kinski) who leads an expedition through the Amazon in search of El Dorado, but only finds disease, hunger and lots of mud. As the crew dies off one by one, Aguirre becomes more delusional and demented. The final scene of spider monkeys overrunning his raft is a haunting and brilliant image. *–LF*

ANATOMY (2000)



Partly a German reaction to the *Scream* movement, *Anatomy* casts *Run Lola Run*'s Franka Potente as an ambitious medical student in a medical school more at home for psychos and nutjobs. As she soon discovers, there's this crazy, frat-like organization on campus that likes to perform autopsies on live humans, resulting in some creepy imagery. The movie may not be a total ride, but it's better horror than you thought the Germans were capable of. *–RL*

THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI (1919)

There's nothing too remarkable about its story, in which mad doctor Caligari hypnotises a man to go out and murder people for him, but the Expressionist, surreal set designs were groundbreaking and remain unusual even to this day. *–RL*

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari

EXTERMINATING ANGEL (1962)

Luis Buñuel's class satire puts a group of wealthy snobs in a room that they can't escape from, for no apparent reason. In other words, *Cube* with a higher tax bracket. Oh, if only life imitated art… *–RL*

THE GOLEM (1915)

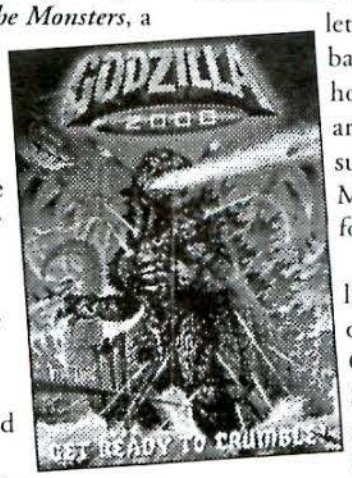
A precursor to *Frankenstein*, *The Golem* is a hulking statue brought to life by a rabbi to protect the town. But as would be expected, the statue doesn't necessarily cotton to orders and starts to go more than a little bonkers. *–RL*

MUTE WITNESS (1994)

A mute woman witnesses a murder on a slasher movie set. So obviously, the murderer starts to come for her. And no one can hear her cries for help because she's a mute. More than a few Hitchcockian nods in this thriller from Anthony Waller (soon to sell himself out for *An*

GODZILLA

Arguably Japan's biggest star – both literally and figuratively – Godzilla has been chugging around for *nearly five decades* now, beginning in 1956 with ***Godzilla, King of the Monsters***, a popular and rather sober and serious affair that introduced the world to the nuclear-borne, city-trashing lizard. Americanized with footage starring Raymond Burr, the original film is one of the scant few depicting Big G as a pure bad guy.



But of all the Godzilla movies, 1962's ***King Kong vs. Godzilla*** may be my favorite, for one simple reason, which is all spelled out in the title. Plus there's a giant octopus and guys getting drunk on magic berry juice. But the clash of the titans is the centerpiece here, and Kong has the best move when he uproots a tree and shoves it down Godzilla's throat.

In ***Godzilla vs. Mothra*** (1964), Japanese officials recruit a big-ass moth to ward off Big G. Mothra doesn't want to get involved, but changes his mind thanks to the pleadings of these two tiny twins who sing and sing and sing the same damn song. Mothra's "weapon" entails letting loose a little pollen, but the bastard somehow is able to grab hold of 'zilla's tail and yank him around a bit. The lizard reigns supreme until two pupa-stage Mothras spray him with webbing, forcing a quick retreat to the sea.

Destroy All Monsters (1968) is like the Justice League of America of this genre, featuring not only Godzilla, but Mothra, Rodan, Spigas, Baragon, Angurus, Manda and his son, too. They all live happily on Monster Island until some space bastards show up and let 'em go, allowing them free reign of Tokyo, Paris, London, Moscow and New York City! By the

American Werewolf in Paris), with a "surprise" appearance by Sir Alec Guinness. –*RL*

NOSFERATU (1922)

The similarities to *Dracula* are now legendary and

acknowledged. While Universal's *Dracula* may be the better film, F.W. Murnau's silent treatment does offer a creepier villain (the bald Max Shreck) and special effects that look cool all these years later. –*RL*

RUN LOLA RUN (1999)

I'm going out on a limb here: This is the best German movie ever made. Hell, in the year it was released theatrically, it was better than *every* movie out there year, except maybe *Three Kings* and *Magnolia*. It's an hour and a half of cinematic adrenaline, with our ragamuffin heroine (Franka Potente) rushing to grab some quick cash in order to save her boyfriend from impending death as the clock ticks away. What makes the film unique is that director Tom Twyker tells the story three different ways, with three different outcomes, utilizing animation, still photography and a pounding, relentless techno score. Never before or since has a movie been this energetic. –*RL*

SIGFRIED (1924)

Not about the femme, tiger-loving Vegas magician, this early, silent adventure film from Fritz Lang (*M*, *Metropolis*) is a precursor to the Hercules and Conan movies, featuring our sword-wielding hero slaying a giant dragon and hunting treasure. Lots of blood is spilled out of the creature's neck, making it safe viewing in these gory years. –*RL*

ITALY

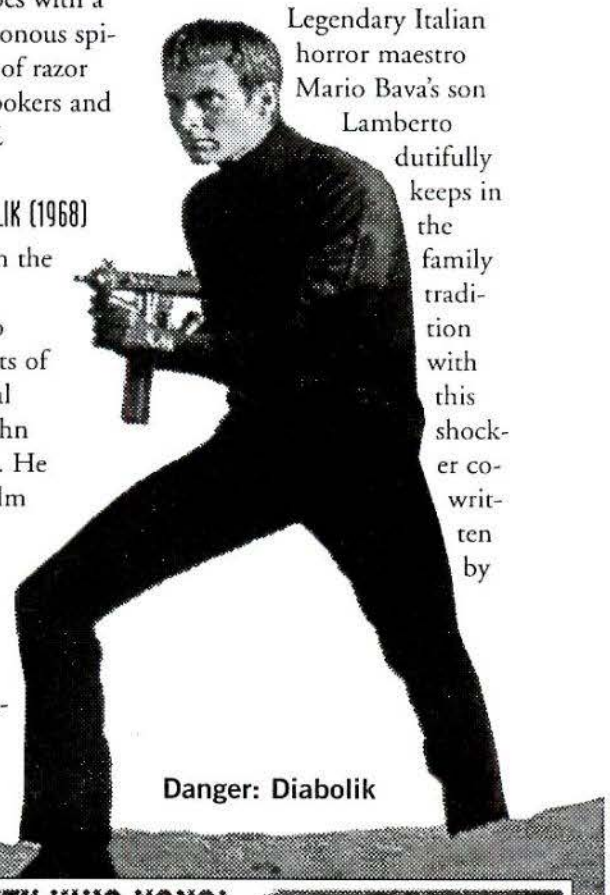
BLOODY PIT OF HORROR (1965)

Mickey Hargitay camps it up as a crimson-costumed avenger of doom when his castle is invaded by a team of voluptuous models. Possessed by the soul of the Marquis de Sade, Mick goes loco and tortures the babes with a robotic, poisonous spider; a wheel of razor blades, hot pokers and the like. –*RL*

DANGER: DIABOLIK (1968)

Straight from the funny pages comes Mario Bava's exploits of supercriminal Diabolik (John Phillip Law). He begins the film pulling off a $10 heist and spends the rest of it attempting to steal a diamond necklace from a castle. It's campy, but its psychedelic feel (not to mention the killer Ennio Morricone theme song) makes it ultra-cool. –*RL*

DEMONS (1986)


Danger: Diabolik

Legendary Italian horror maestro Mario Bava's son Lamberto dutifully keeps in the family tradition with this shocker co-written by

time they're sent back home, the space men send down Ghidrah, the three-headed monster, for more monster carnage!

Things went kiddie for 1969's ***Godzilla's Revenge***, the story of little Ichiro, he of the cap and tiny shorts. Ichiro dreams of living on Monster Island, where he befriends Godzilla's son, who talks! Monsters making their lives miserable include giant crabs, ants and spiders, not to mention a dragon with the face of Grace Jones.

Godzilla himself talks in ***Godzilla vs. Gigan*** (1972), involving a plot by alien cockroaches to take over the world, choosing an amusement park as home base. To help with their invasion, they enlist Ghidrah and Gigan, a metallic bird creature with a buzzsaw in his tummy. Angilas, the four-legged dog/turtle thing with spikes on his back, helps Godzilla and engages him in conversation. There's also a chubby Japanese hippie who attemps a hold-up using an ear of corn.

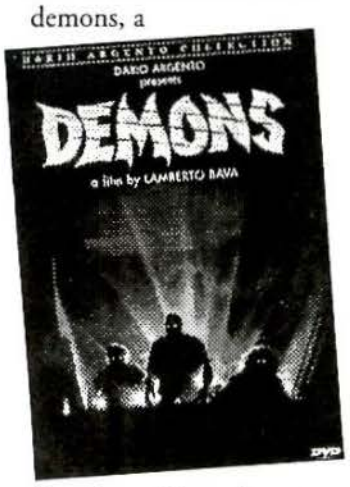
Godzilla meets his near-match in 1974's ***Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla***. Mecha is a robot creature controlled by space men who plan to use it to demolish Tokyo. Godzilla shows up to stop it, with the help of King Seeser, an ancient doglike monster. Mechagodzilla shoots darts, but Godzilla twists his head clean off. No matter, though, because Mecha was back the next year for ***Terror of Mechagodzilla***. He's been patched up by evil scientists and paired with a dragon named Titanosaurus.

Godzilla 1985 is basically a rehash of the original, even using that film's black-and-white footage, not to mention Raymond Burr. Its nuclear weapons theme seems really dated today.

After a rash of high-tech Godzilla adventures in the '90s, most recent was ***Godzilla 2000***, with our oversized anti-hero tracked by the Godzilla Protection Network and teased relentlessly by a silver UFO with tentacles. It's a seriously fun movie in a series that doesn't have a true yawner among them, and hopefully has many more left to come.

—*Rod Lott*

Dario Argento, no stranger to horror himself. In a plot that is basically *Die Hard* with a bunch of demons, a



film about Nostradamus turns a movie theater from the usual bunch of talking, cell-phone ringing, popcorn-throwing clowns into oozing hellspawns that look like the Dracs from *Enemy Mine*. Italian cheese at its finest. *–LF*

DEMONS 2 (1987)

The premise of *Demons* is transplanted to a high-rise apartment building, lending it a voyeuristic, *Rear Window*-type feel. A demon escapes from a horror film on TV, and turns the viewer into a demon, who then converts virtually every other resident, including a little boy, a baby and a dog. Predictable to a fault, but a ton of gory fun to watch. *–RL*

THE DIABOLICAL DR. Z (1965)

Jess Franco's Dr. Z and his equally diabolical daughter make innocent strangers their zombie slaves by injecting them with a secret (as it should be) mind-control formula. After the doc dies, Daughter Z does pa proud by continuing to carry out his fiendish experiments. *–RL*

HERCULES IN THE HAUNTED WORLD (1961)

Of all those crappy Hercules imports of the '50s and '60s, this one is the most fun. Herc has to go save his fiancée from the depths of Hell, encountering a stone monster, trees that bleed, reanimated corpses and unreal dubbing. Christopher Lee portrays an evil vampire; Mario Bava directed. *–RL*

THE HOUSE OF EXORCISM (1974)

Also known as *Lisa and the Devil*, this *Exorcist* rip-off is directed by the prolific Mario Bava. Priest Robert Alda tries to cast out the evil that lies within Elke Sommer; she responds by

vomiting frogs. Telly Savalas eats lollipops. *–RL*

THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE (1960)

Five easy-on-the-eye dancers find themselves stranded at a spooky castle inhabited by vampires. The female ones walk around naked. What more do you need to know? *–RL*

SUPER FUZZ (1980)

When officer David Speed (Terence Hill) is out on a routine traffic investigation at an Indian reservation, an atomic bomb goes off, giving him superpowers of the cheapest variety. See him stop bullets with his teeth, read comics on the ceiling and eat lots of beans. Italian comedy at its best! With a slumming Ernest Borgnine as his befuddled, easily angered partner. Ernest dances on a gigantic balloon made out of bubble gum and falls through the earth to China. This film also contains the greatest theme song in the history of motion pictures. Trust me. *–LF*

TENTACLES (1977)

Well, *Jaws* it ain't. A giant octopus unleashes terror on a beach, mostly by squirting blank ink at the camera. Reporter John Huston investigates, amidst a cast of has-beens Shelley Winters, Claude Akins and Henry Fonda. The octopus attacks a sailboat race, a really fat guy tubing and a baby. He also *growls*. He's finally brought to his death by two whales who ram him into chum. *–RL*

TERROR AT THE OPERA (1987)

A young opera diva finds everyone around her being murdered in gruesome ways by a mysterious killer in black, in Dario Argento's creepy flick. In a disturbing twist, she is forced to watch as her coworkers die – not easy to watch for those with aversion to ocular trauma. There's a raven attack, a woman shot in the eye as she looks through a peephole and a man stabbed upward through the neck – you see it from the inside of his mouth. Thanks, Dario. *–RL*

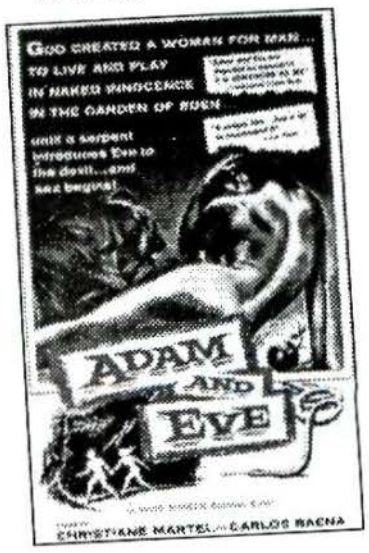
ZOMBIE 2 (1979)

This is perhaps the most popular of all Italian zombie films, and with good reason: It's the only flick in history to feature a duel to the (un)death between a reanimated corpse and a shark – yes, a real live shark. Lucio Fulci can be considered a cinematic genius for this alone. The fact that this is also pretty suspenseful that doesn't skim on the maggot-encrusted walking dead doesn't hurt, either. *–LF*

MEXICO & SPAIN, ETC.

ADAM AND EVE (1956)

The Bible story comes to life, with God whipping up light, the seas and all that jazz. Then he creates a beefy Adam from swirling dust and soon gives him Eve, who's kinda hot, though sports crotch pads and nipple covers. After the snake-and-apple bit, our couple is banished to an arid desert, where Adam snaps the neck of a wolf. *–RL*



AMORES PERROS (2000)

I refer to it as "the bloody dog movie." It's one of the few movies in which "influenced by *Pulp Fiction*" is not a bad thing. I'd say it was heavily influenced by *Traffic*, if they hadn't been shot at the same time – there's a similar use of hand-held, jittery camera; washed-out color palette; and gritty stock. The movie itself is gritty, violent and haunting. The director expertly weaves three stories around a car crash, all affecting each participant in different ways (some minimally, others dramatically). If Guy Ritchie (whose movies I like) turned off the flash and really jumped headfirst into telling a strong story, it might come close to this. *–BW*

BULLDOG (199?)

He's big. He's fat. He mad. And he's Mexican. *Bulldog* is a cop on the edge who must avenge the death of his family. The fact that he walks like he has a back brace and is a little on the hefty side does not deter him from his mission. Gory, exploitative and more fun than four *Extreme Prejudices*, two *Executioners* and a *Death Wish 4: The Crackdown*. It plays regularly on Univision, so keep on the lookout. *–LF*

CABEZA DE VACA (1991)

A cross between *Aguirre: The Wrath of God*, *El Topo* and *Dances with Wolves*. When one watches *Cabeza de Vaca*, they truly realize what a politically correct, liberalized white man's whitewash of history *Dances with Wolves* was. Based on a true story, Spanish conquistador Cabeza de Vaca is captured by Floridian Indians

and soon begins to realize he has the power to heal, giving him God-like powers over death. The film is gritty and filed with stark, disturbing images. This was released in the U.S. by, of all people, Roger Corman. *–LF*

CRONOS (1992)

A remarkable vampire fable that is both beautifully moving and horrifically bizarre at the same time. From Guillermo del Toro, better known in America as the director of the underrated *Mimic*. *–LF*

EL AÑO DE LA PESTE (1979)

A real odd gem. In the near future, a plague wipes out Mexico and people go to desperate measures to learn to cope with the horror around them. If you can find this, get it. *–LF*

EL DIA DE LA BESTIA (1995)

In what I consider to be the greatest horror film of all time, a priest discovers the exact date of the birth of the Anti-Christ, but has no idea who he is. What follows is a journey through the underbelly of Madrid where we meet fat heavy metal fans, terrorists who set bums on fire and a TV psychic named Cavan, among others. Truly atmospheric and creepy but at the same time, a darkly comic film with plenty of nervous laughter, it's available in a cut U.S. version titled *Day of the Beast*. *–LF*

EL TOPO (1971)

Alexandro Jodorowsky's mesmerizing cult epic. Sure, it's often pretentious and heavy-handed, but the imagery is so bizarre that, like a mangled mess on the side of the road, you can't help but be drawn to watch. A mixture of surreal art film and spaghetti western tribute, *El Topo* is as close to a visualization of a dreamworld that we will ever see. Plus it has midgets. *–LF*

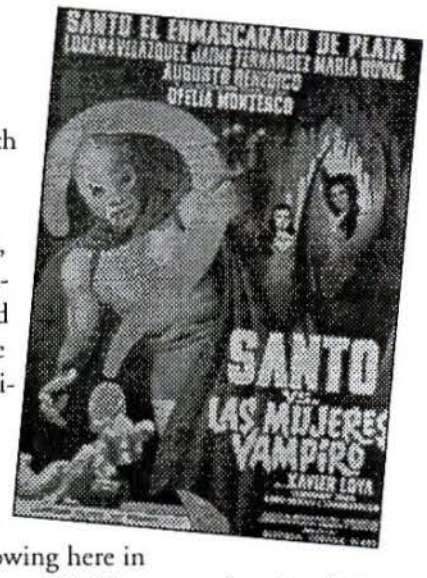
FOR YOUR HEIGHT ONLY (1979)

What is it with the Filipinos and their James Bond ripoffs? At least this one's different … *really different*. Weng Wang is Agent 00, and he's a midget! Hence, the title. *–RL*

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD (1960)

When it comes to kiddie flicks, Disney has nothing on the Mexicans. In this, Red kisses strangers and boasts the singing voice of a Streisand-esque diva,

SANTO



You can have your Batman, Indiana Jones and James Bond. For me, the greatest superhero combines all of them with a distinct South of the Border flavor and a knack for flipping werewolves off the ropes of a wrestling ring. Ladies and gentleman … *Santo!*

Santo is a crimefighter, adventurer, super-spy, monster smasher, martial arts master and all-around good guy who just happens to also be the greatest wrestler ever. But don't let that last part drive you away. And I understand why you would feel that way; as Americans, when we hear the words "wrestling movie," we automatically think of *Body Slam*, *No Holds Barred* or, Lord forbid, *Ready to Rumble*. But in Mexico, wrestling (or *luche libre* as it's known) is not a million-dollar business run by megalomaniacal ex-steroid juicers. It's a true art form with no real equal.

I first heard of Santo as a child, when my grandmother Guadalupe bought my brother and me foot-tall Santo and Blue Demon action figures. They weren't fully posable, were made of hollow plastic and had no grip, but they did kick our other action figures' asses. It was not unusual for us to play Santo vs. Skeletor, whereupon Santo and Blue Demon teamed up with our Masters of the Universe toys. From that point on, I was hooked on not only the man Santo, but on the whole culture of *luche libre*.

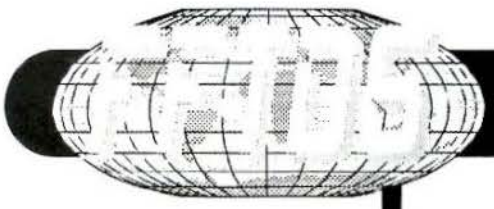
Brought to Mexico in the 1930s by American promoter Salvador Lutteroth, what was originally a mere replica of American grudge match wrestling eventually mutated into a fantastic, almost mythic spectator sport. To actually watch a *luche libre* match is a beautiful sight to behold: overweight masked men doing leaps, backflips and other feats of daring-do that American wrestlers wouldn't bother to attempt. The wrestlers are often masked to not only give the wrestler an aura of mystery, but to give him the superhero secret identity. Over time, the mask transformed into a form of honor and when a good guy wrestler was unmasked by a *rudo* (a heel-type), he loses all honor and must retire the character.

Of all the characters that came from *luche libre*, the most popular of all time is the legendary Santo. Even years after his death (which was a national day of mourning, much like an Elvis or Lennon), his popularity and influence is still evident in Mexico, and he's gained a cult following here in America as well. The reason is quite obvious: His films are masterpieces of action cinema. Combining everything that makes a movie worthwhile – zombies, bathing beauties, vampires, robots, midgets, alien invaders, wrestling and kung-fu – Santo films are more surreal than anything Buñuel ever did and more exciting than any big-budget Bruckheimer action pic.

One of the first Santo films was 1961's ***Santo Contra Los Zombies*** (aka *Invasion of the Zombies*). In this movie, Santo is just your everyday, mild-mannered wrestler who has to go up against an army of zombie wrestlers created by a mad scientist determined to take out the masked do-gooder. How is that *not* entertainment? Santo has a high-tech crime lab, is friends with the police commissioner and even after pummeling some gangster baddies, he heads right into the ring to lay *el* smackdown on some reanimated *rudos*. This was followed up (and invariably topped) in 1962 by the influential ***Santo Contra Las Mujers Vampiro*** (*Santo vs. the Vampire Women*).

Los Zombies may have been a hit, but *Las Mujers Vampiro* was the film that established him as the biggest star in Mexico. In this classic, Santo's wrestling ancestors foiled the world domination scheme of Tundra and Zornia, ancient vampire witches who are back for revenge. They are aided by henchmen Frankenstein and Lobo Negro, who are also well adept at wrestling. The titular witches kidnap the virtuous, wide-eyed innocent Diana in an attempt to corrupt her and have her become the new queen of the undead. Of course, Santo triumphs and the vampires are laid to rest, but not before many flips and pins are had.

The original Santo went on to star in more than 60 films, in many of which he is teamed with the supernatural Blue Demon.



My personal favorite is 1966's ***Santo Contra la Invasion de los Marcianos*** (*Santo vs. the Martian Invasion*), wherein the masked one takes on an entire army of evil alien wrestlers. And although I have never seen it, when I was last in Mexico, I saw a video box for *Santo Contra Bruce Lee*. I have been trying to get my hands on it for months now, to no avail.

For many years, Blue Demon had his own mildly successful series of films. Many rip-offs were also released to the public featuring superteams like the Champions of Justice and the subgenre of wrestling women films, where burly ass-kicking chicks fought Aztec mummies and robots gone mad.

Sadly, Santo passed away in 1984, and with him, the *luche libre* film also died. Many attempts were made to revive the genre, many featuring El Hijo de Santo. Late nights on Univision, you can catch more recent sex comedies featuring a Santo-esque characters that are fun to watch nevertheless.

It is very easy to see why Santo was, and is, popular. He was a real superhero, unlike a comic book character. A kid can't get X-ray vision and invulnerability overnight, but he can sure learn to be a *luchador*. Santo was a product of the times in Mexico, symbolizing strength, morality and goodness. Just because he did it through wrestling didn't lessen the message. If anything, it made it stronger and more accessible. And the fact he fought vampires and aliens? Well, that was just cool.

—Louis Fowler

attracting the attention of the resident chop-licking pervert wolf and his midget sidekick skunk, whose dialogue is sped-up. Red encounters a giant angry spider and belts her own Broadway-style tunes. *–RL*

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD AND TOM THUMB VS. THE MONSTERS (1960)

So this *Snow White*-looking witch has an entire squad of monsters under her employ, including Frankenstein, a top-hatted Dracula, a robot, what looks like a black Tarzan, a giant carrot and Pinhead

Now...The Famous Characters of the Fairy Tale World... Together For The First Time!
LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD... THE WOLF... STINKY THE SKUNK PLUS... TOM THUMB AND THE FRIENDLY REDHEADED OGRE!
HORRIBLE MONSTERS!
DEVILISH DRAGONS!
WICKED WITCHES!
in EASTMAN COLORSCOPE
K. GORDON MURRAY
ALL NEW!
Little Red Riding Hood and the Monsters

(as in Zippy, not *Hellraiser*, and I weep for that lost possibility). The incredibly naïve Red and her Ritalin skunk pal befriend the inch-high Tom Thumb, and together with the wolf – who so tormented Red earlier that same year – they fight the monsters. Unless I dreamed all that. Directed by Roberto Rodriguez – could it … *nah*. *–RL*

LOVE LETTERS OF A PORTUGUESE NUN (1976)

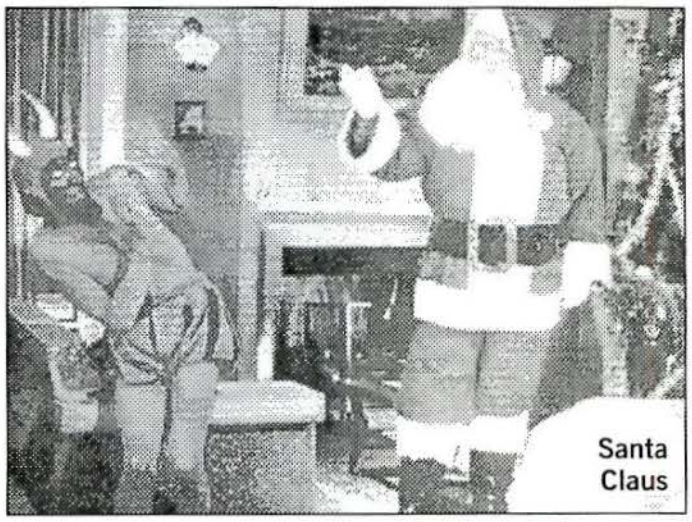
A young woman is placed a convent against her will, where she is vaginally inspected by Mother Superior upon arrival. She soon is forced to give Satan some diabolical, doggy-style doings. Eventually, good triumphs over evil and the penguins are made to pay. *–LF*

NO. 1 LICENSED TO LOVE AND KILL (1986)

Puerto Rico's answer to James Bond is actually British and looks like a squirrel. Out to look for a lost American diplomat, he comes face to face with an evil senator who shoots live humans for sport, frame-broils his midget sidekick and lets his mansion whores (some of whom he keeps caged) take a swim in a pool of acid. *–RL*

PERDITA DURANGO (1997)

Alex de la Iglesia's film (aka *Dance with the Devil*) can be considered as a quasi-companion to David Lynch's *Wild at Heart*. Rosie Perez is the titular character, who along with Satanist Javier Bardem, must get a truckload of fetuses to Las Vegas. It's kind of like *Smokey and the Bandit* meets the Church of Satan. *–LF*



PUSS 'N BOOTS (1961)

K. Gordon Murray undertakes (with hallucinogens?) the classic children's tale of an innocent shepherd boy who gains a new friend when a cat magically grows to human size and talks. Puss 'N Boots attempts to turn the boy from a peasant into a hero so that he can marry the underage princess. Complicating matters is a bald, bloated genie and his, but Puss just turns them into a mouse and a kernel of corn. More disturbing is the scene in which Puss makes the boy strips. Most disturbing are the musical numbers. *–RL*

SANTA CLAUS (1960)

In which the beloved character borne from parental lies fights Satan and still finds time to do that whole presents thing. And sing songs. From K. Gordon Murray, of course. *–RL*

SATANICO PANDEMONIUM: LA SEXORCISTA (1977)

An entry in the '70s lesbian nun sub-genre. An attractive nun is tempted by the devil (or a man in a cheesy Pied Piper outfit), haunted by visions and is subsequently possessed. Eventually, the whole convent is taken over by the horned one, and much sex is had. What sets this film apart from others is that it truly has an eerie, almost evil presence to it. *–LF*

SINGLE ACTION (1997)

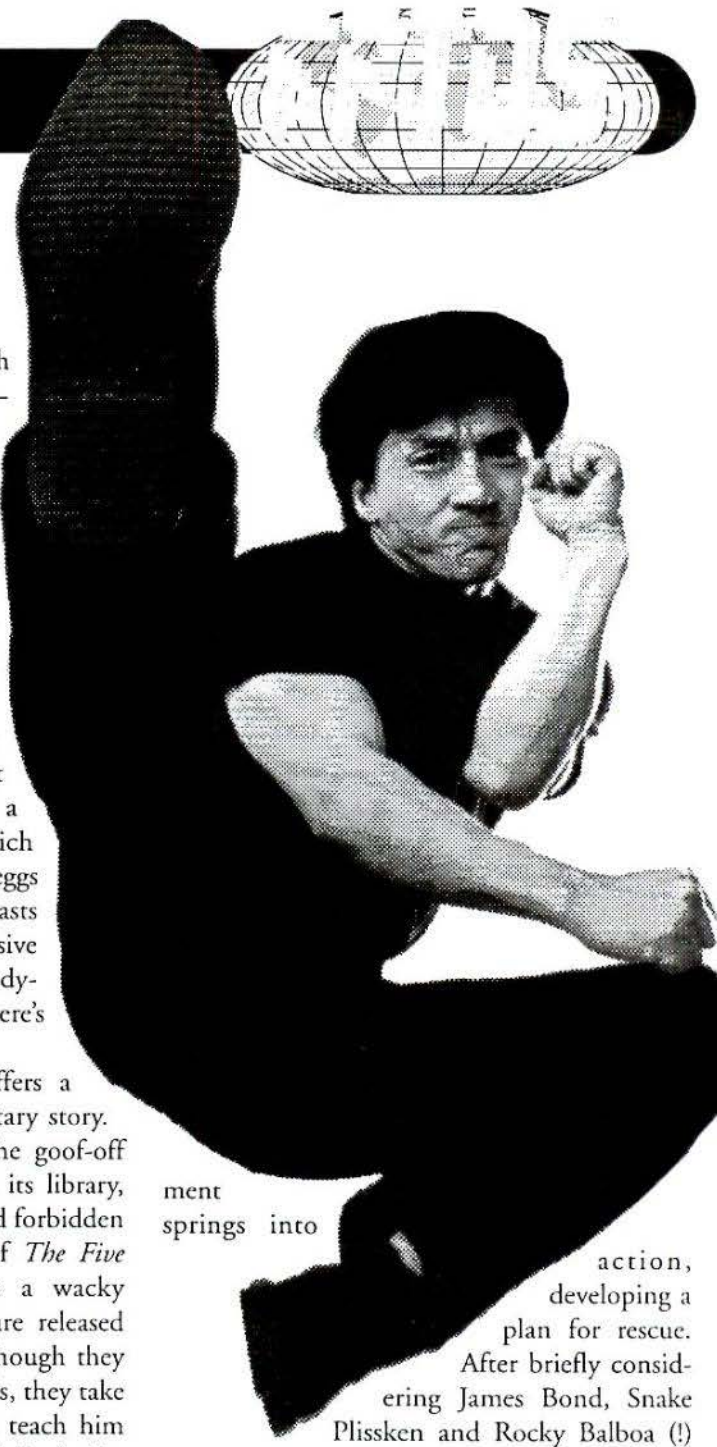
Carlos Gallardo, the original desperado from *El Mariachi*, returns as Amigo, a kind of Mexican James Bond, only I don't remember ol' Jimmy kicking this much ass. Amigo rips through the small Mexican town armed only with a single-action revolver, looking for the brother of a murdered politico. Awesome action, hot chicks and a definite *Desperado*-vibe make this an above-average straight-to-video actioner. *–LF*

SOLARIS (1972)

Andrei Tarkovsky's science-fiction epic defies quick-and-easy descriptions, and to do so would spoil its surprises. Needless to say, its fans are quick to proclaim it as better than Stanley Kubrick's *2001*. You decide. Steven Soderbergh and James Cameron are collaborating on a remake. *–RL*

H

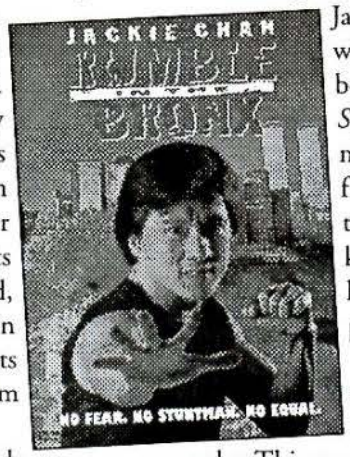
JACKIE CHAN



Before stateside success in *Rush Hour* and *Shanghai Noon*, Jackie Chan was only known to most Americans as a bit player in *Cannonball Run*. But those in the know rejoiced in a lengthy filmography of Hong Kong adventures that has solidified Jackie's reputation as the globe's top action star.

His pre-American career can be divided into two distinct phases: his earliest films, which though watchable, are unremarkable, and a later group of polished, contemporary action-adventures with production values right up there with Hollywood's blockbusters. It is this latter group in which Jackie perfected his role as the clown prince of kung fu.

Jackie's early, on-the-cheap films follow a tried but true formula: Jackie plays a kind-hearted but slightly mischievous young man who gets into trouble – often with someone with superior kung fu – and then trains with a master, only to have a final-reel battle – usually in an open field – with the person who whipped his ass good before. After a good five minutes or so, he triumphs with a well-placed fatal blow, punctuated by a victorious leap in the air, which is then freeze-framed and superimposed with a "THE END" credit. Any love interest is cursory and goes nowhere, and a never-fails gag in which one guy farts into another guy's face mid-bout often works its way into the mix. I've also noticed, with alarming frequency, a scene in a restaurant in which someone eats like a pig and then tries to squirm his way out of paying.



Every bit of the formula holds true in his 1971 starring debut, ***Master with Cracked Fingers***. A thoroughly cheap but thoroughly lovable flick, *Master* follows the exploits of a young boy who just wants to learn how to kick some ass. Under the tutelage of his master, he grows up to be Chan, and does just that. Yes, it's formulaic, but fun to see Chan strut his then-unseen stuff.

Another early appearance came in 1974's ***Rumble in Hong Kong*** (actually *Police Woman* and retitled to ride the tails of *Rumble in the Bronx*) – an unpolished and routine (but nonetheless enjoyable) martial-arts cheapie, and one of Jackie's few roles as a villain.

The merely serviceable plot has a taxi driver pursued by a gang of ruffians for a piece of evidence hidden in his car. Jackie doesn't get to do a whole lot – other than act with a *huge* hairy mole on his left cheek – but he does have a man-to-man fight scene toward the end, and the movie is fun while it lasts.

The oddly titled ***Half a Loaf of Kung Fu!*** (1977) boasts what must be the most surreal opening-credits sequence in a genre full of them. What follows is bizarre itself, with sped-up comedy sequences, a flatulent supporting character, a dream sequence that devolves into a *Popeye* parody and a slow-motion fight scene in which Jackie pelts a husky enemy with eggs *and* live poultry! The flimsy story casts Jackie as a bodyguard for an expensive piece of jade. He and his fellow bodyguards fight a lot of bad guys. There's also a witch in it.

Spiritual Kung Fu (1978) offers a unique spin on its rather rudimentary story. In a temple of Shaolin monks, the goof-off Jackie offers to guard its library, which houses a lost and forbidden book by the name of *The Five Style Fists*. Through a wacky mishap, five ghosts are released from the book and though they terrify the other pupils, they take kindly to Jackie and teach him how to fight in their indisputably lethal style.

Rather than taking a horror angle, *Spiritual Kung Fu* milks its apparitions for nothing but yuks. This may explain why the ghosts resemble men in white pancake makeup with matching tights and Hawaiian grass skirts, not to mention the hair that resembles a ten-cent cheerleader pom-pom. It's as if the costume designer – assuming the film had one – was told, "Marry the look of Raggedy Ann with the Pillsbury Doughboy."

The silliness turns serious only for the climactic fight, in which the five ghosts take part.

Another early film – so early his role is only a supporting one – ***Fantasy Mission Force*** (1979), probably wouldn't make a lick of sense even in its original language, but when's the last time you saw a slapstick action film that ended with most of the main characters dying tragically?

As four generals are kidnapped, the government springs into action, developing a plan for rescue. After briefly considering James Bond, Snake Plissken and Rocky Balboa (!) to do the job, they instead settle on the half-dozen-or-so miscreants and near-retards that unofficially comprise the informal Fantasy Mission Force.

They stumble half-assed in and out of trouble, soon finding themselves trapped in a village of Amazon women, the leader of which wears a superhero outfit and leaps across the water. Jackie – dubbed by an Eddie Deezen type – fights off all the Amazons at once, and all while holding a live chicken!

The group then spends the night in a haunted house, complete with a leaping vampire, a seductress-cum-skeleton, zombie monks with rotating heads playing *mah jongg* and hands that come out of the wall to offer toilet paper to defecators!

The generals are being held captive by a group of Nazis that surf atop their cars, like something out of *Mad Max*. The Nazis have the upper hand, slaying all but Jackie.

You have to love a film that spits in the face

of screenwriting so that it may bring you massive kung fu, *Benny Hill*-type interstitials and a soundtrack partially stolen straight from *Escape from New York* and *Planet of the Apes*.

The seeds of phase two of Jackie's career were planted with the 1978 release of the ever-popular ***Drunken Master***. It's one of his best films ever, providing a fine balance between the action and the comedy, two areas in which Jackie is equally deft.

The story of *Drunken Master* does not tread new territory until the second half, when Jackie's master teaches him the secret of his successful kung fu: alcohol, and plenty of it. By downing prodigious amounts of wine, he finds he can whip almost anyone's sorry, sober ass. The booze angle helps lift the fighting from being just another extended sequence of the same ol' kicks.

From there, Chan's films got smarter and more elaborate, continuing the comic-action balance that *Drunken Master* did so well.

A period piece in pirate times, ***Project A*** (1983) co-stars Sammo Hung, as the two cause all sorts of trouble on the high seas and low shores.

Though overlong, it does feature some trademark set pieces, including a bicycle chase through narrow alleyways and the famed, three-story drop from a clock tower to the hard ground below, which nearly killed him.

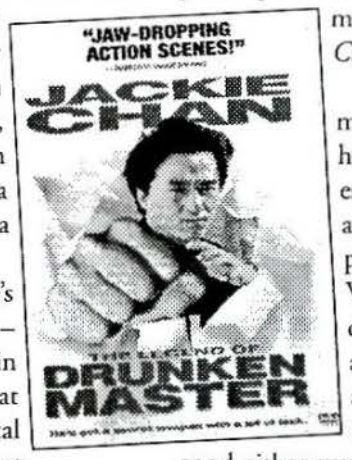
New Line's low-cost gamble of releasing *Rumble in the Bronx* wide in 1995 paid off big, so Miramax soon followed suit with a domestic issue of 1992's ***Supercop***. Though fewer theatergoers "go"ed to theaters for it than they did for *Bronx*, it's a superior film, and one of his best, partly because he's teamed with fellow cop Michelle Yeoh, who poses as his sister in order to go undercover. There are some terrific stunts here, most notably Chan dangling from a moving helicopter, not to mention Yeoh's driving a motorcycle onto a moving train.

Like Jean-Claude Van Damme's *Double Impact* – except good – ***Twin Dragons*** (1992) casts Jackie in dual roles, as twins separated at birth during your average hospital hostage situation. One's a brilliant concert musician and conductor, the other a ponytailed ne'er-do-well, and they reluctantly join forces to do that whole crime-fighting thing when the ne'er-do-well gets in trouble and the musician is continually mistaken for his twin. ***Crime Story*** (1993) stands out (but not *sticks* out) as a dead-serious cop yarn amidst all these romps.

The most recent of Jackie's imports to play here was 1994's ***The Legend of Drunken Master***. Despite the title, it's not really a remake of the original

'78 hit. Though you do get your standard shamed-son subplot and the moonshine madness, it's really an entirely different movie altogether.

Curiously, *Legend* seems like two movies pasted together, as the first half is slow yet comical, whereas the second half is quick and pumping with adrenaline. Fans claim the extended showdown that closes *Legend* is one of Jackie's very best, and I have to agree. If you rented this one and watched only this scene, you'd more than get your money's worth. Even the not-so-studious viewers will pick up on the striking similarities a mid-movie bar fight has with the later *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

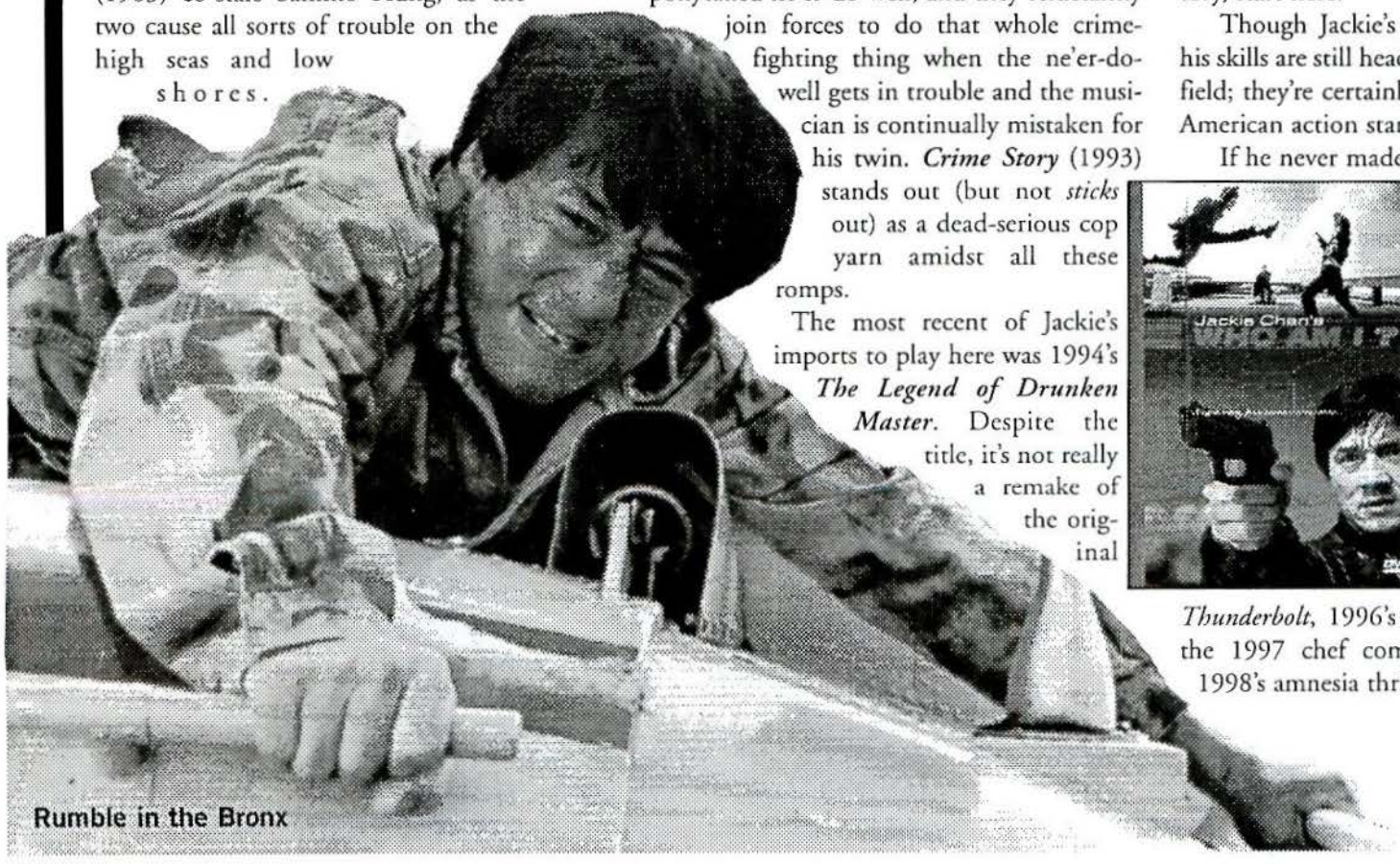


Gorgeous (1999) is likely the most atypical Chan movie since he became a superstar, because essentially it is first and foremost a romantic comedy. It just happens to have some kicking. Whether it's an intentional deviation on Chan's part or just an unfortunate result of the aging process actually doesn't matter, because the movie's good either way, and surprisingly touching. If you're trying to ease a woman into Chan territory, start here.

Though Jackie's starting to show his age, his skills are still heads above most others in his field; they're certainly light years ahead of any American action star.

If he never made a film again, we've luckily got dozens upon dozens to revisit and enjoy. Some of his other noteworthy films that you shouldn't pass up are the 1995 crossover hit *Police Story*, the 1986 *Raiders of the Lost Ark*-esque *Armour of God*, its 1991 sequel *Operation Condor*, the high-octane 1995 actioner *Thunderbolt*, 1996's *Jackie Chan's First Strike*, the 1997 chef comedy *Mr. Nice Guy* and 1998's amnesia thriller *Who Am I?*

—Rod Lott


Rumble in the Bronx

HAYAO MIYAZAKI

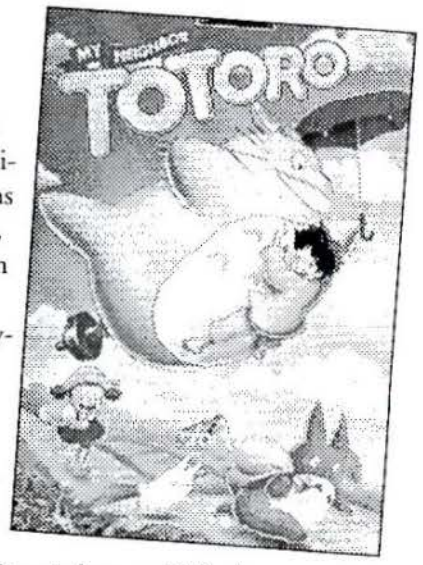
It seems like *anime* is all the rage today with *Pokémon*, *Digimon* and other kiddie crap polluting the airwaves. Sadly, this is the only exposure most people will have to Japanese animation. There is, in fact, a wide variety of *anime* available for U.S. audiences. It ranges from dark stories of giant tentacle monsters that rape schoolgirls to the giant robots we all know and love.

While my exposure to animé is still quite limited, I have become an avid fan of legendary Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki. His films are still somewhat difficult to find in the U.S., despite the fact that Disney owns U.S. distribution rights. (Evidently, they would rather plagiarize his work than actually release it.) I have managed to track down three of his films and they have quickly become some of my favorites. If you're looking for anime that doesn't suck – or insult your intelligence – these films would be a great place to start.

My Neighbor Totoro (1988) is one of Miyazaki's all-ages films, so there are no decapitations or rampaging monsters. However, despite being a kids movie, it's probably the strangest and spookiest Miyazaki film I've seen. It starts with two young girls moving into a new house with their father. Their mother is sick and confined to a hospital. At the new house, the kids discover weird things like mysterious little fuzzball creatures that run away when a human enters the room and cat-like creatures that live in the forest near their house. *Totoro* is beautifully designed and animated and a surprisingly slow-paced and quiet film.

Kiki's Delivery Service (1989) is my favorite of Miyazaki's films. It's a light-hearted comedy about a 13-year-old witch that leaves home to better learn her craft. She finds a place to live in a faraway land and starts a delivery service since she can get around quickly on her flying broom. Of course, there are plenty of high-flying action sequences, but there are also plenty of quiet, character-driven sequences as Kiki deals with the everyday challenges of growing up. If this were an American cartoon, it would be full of stupid songs and goofy-ass characters. In Miyazaki's hands, it becomes a very warm and human story.

Princess Mononoke (1997) is almost universally considered Miyazaki's masterpiece and



one of the greatest animated films of all time. It's truly an epic that draws heavily on Japanese history and folkore. In fact, a lot of the symbolism is lost on U.S. viewers.

But even if you can't make sense of the weird philosophical stuff, this is a powerful and highly entertaining epic that depicts a monumental struggle between man and nature. A clan of humans who have built an iron factory on the edge of an ancient forest find themselves at war with ancient animal gods. There's also a maggot-infested boar monster, spooky monkeys that want to eat humans and lots of decapitations.

At 134 minutes long, this one isn't for the kiddos.

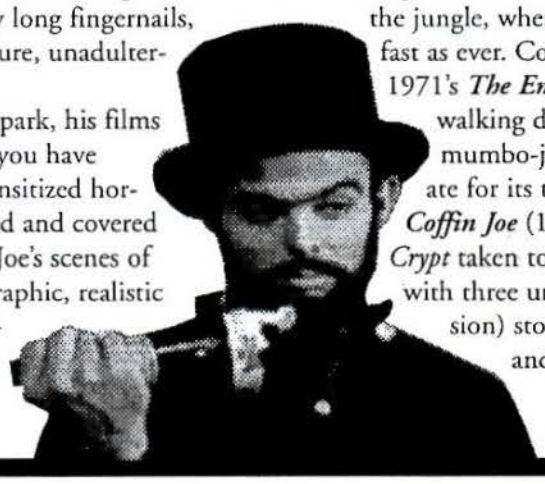
—Chris Sharpe

COFFIN JOE

"SADISMO! VIOLENCIA!" scream the trailers for the films of Coffin Joe, and they sure don't lie.

Brazilian filmmaker Jose Mojica Marins – aka Coffin Joe – is among the craziest cult-film icons in the world. A force behind the camera, Coffin Joe also appears in his films, often sporting his trademark top hat, devilish goatee and freakishly long fingernails, and dripping with pure, unadulterated evil.

No walks in the park, his films are unlike anything you have ever seen. Even desensitized horror fans have cowered and covered their eyes at Coffin Joe's scenes of shock, combining graphic, realistic violence with graphic, leering sex – resulting in one strange flick that, if you're lucky, isn't in color.



At Midnight I'll Take Your Soul (1963) is among his most popular, and it's just bloody as hell. Gouged eyes is only the beginning in this one, folks. The wonderfully titled ***Sex and Blood on the Trail of Treasure*** takes his sick proceedings to the jungle, where the blood flows just as fast as ever. Coffin Joe went hippie for 1971's ***The End of Man***, with naked walking dead and semi-spiritual mumbo-jumbo that was appropriate for its time. ***The Strange World of Coffin Joe*** (1968) is like *Tales from the Crypt* taken to its most horrific level, with three unrelated (except in perversion) stories involving necrophilia and human torture.

Admittedly, I'm not brave enough to sample all Coffin Joe has to offer – for instance, 1978's ***Perversion***, in which he bites off a woman's nipple – so the uninitiated are warned to sample the man in small doses before diving in headfirst. To that end, Something Weird Video released ***Coffin Joe's Visions of Terror*** in 1994, a compilation of 14 trailers that'll give you *more* than enough idea of what to expect from this one-of-a-kind horror idol.

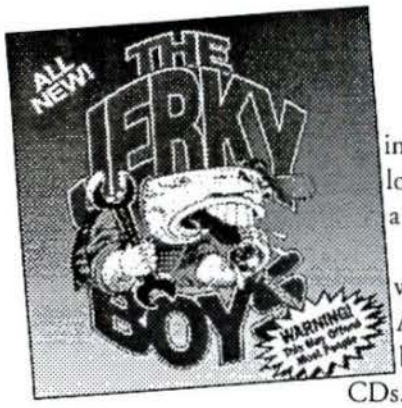
—Rod Lott

REVIEWER TRANSLATION GUIDE
BW – Brian Winkeler
LF – Louis Fowler
RL – Rod Lott
RY – Richard York

HEY, JERKY! LISTEN WHEN I'M TALKIN' TO YOUSE!

HITCH Interviews The Jerky Boys

By Rod Lott



Your mom and dad always told you prank calls would get you nothing but trouble, which is true. If you don't count The Jerky Boys.

The once-anonymous duo known only as Johnny B. and Kamal burst out of nowhere (bootleg success excepted) in 1993 with the release of their self-titled CD of prank calls, introducing listeners to such oddball characters as irate loudmouth Frank Rizzo, the inept Egyptian Magician and stereotypical Jewish hypochondriac Sol Rosenberg. It was a huge, word-of-mouth hit, as was the near-immediate sequel, *The Jerky Boys 2*.

By 1995, everyone knew the Jerky Boys. Their profiles were raised – not to mention their identities exposed – with an MTV special of live pranks and the release of the Disney-distributed motion picture, *The Jerky Boys: The Movie*, in which their phone calls raised the ire of mobster Alan Arkin. Despite a low budget and legions of fans, the film did not see the success or acclaim of the string of CDs.

The Boys jumped ship to a major-label deal with Mercury Records in 1996. Three albums were released under the deal, but the Boys were unhappy with the arrangement and ended the contract.

After laying low for a while, the Boys are back – or at least Johnny Brennan, who provided most of the characters from the start; Kamal has since moved on to other things. Better yet, the Boys are in control of their own material, beginning with the current release of *The Jerky Tapes* CD, available through an exclusive agreement with the comedy website *laugh.com*.

HITCH: It's been a while since the last album. What have you been up to?

Johnny: It's taken many years and many dollars, but I finally got away from the record labels. I took a chance on releasing this new album on my own. I thought, "Let me just see what the fans think," and the response and letters have been amazing. They're telling me they wish I would have been doing this all along.

HITCH: You were on Mercury Records last, right? So what's wrong with the record labels?

Johnny: I gotta be honest, it's not so much what's wrong with *them*. It was own my fault, really. You come into this sort of thing green, and I didn't know what the hell I was doing. You want a record contract on one hand, but you gotta sign the deal. Hindsight is always 20/20, and if I knew we were gonna sell eight million records, I might have done it on my own all along, you know?

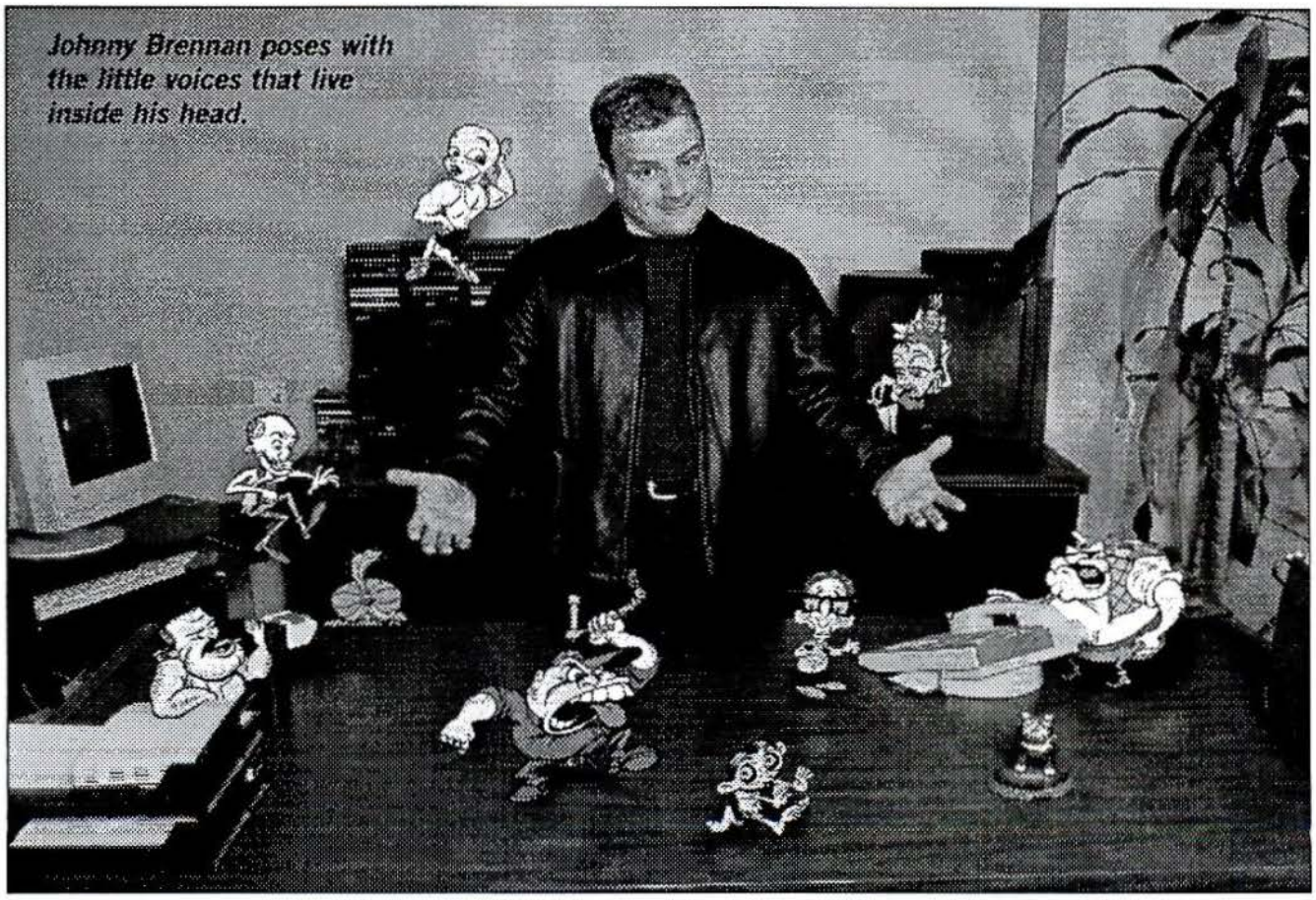
The labels aren't bad; they're just in the business to make money. It cost about $15 to put my CD together; it might cost $3 million for someone like Bon Jovi. They just didn't get behind it. They tell you they're going to do all this promotion, and they do nothing.

Before we put out the first album, *The New York Times* had already called it the biggest bootleg ever, so they knew going into it that The Jerky Boys would sell, so they didn't do anything extra for it. Meanwhile, I was telling them if they'd just get behind it, they'd see it do cartwheels.

But that's not what they want to put their money behind. They like to put their money on all these happy, tap-shoe dance bands you got running around today. And my attitude is, I can do what you do, for myself.

HITCH: So the new album is sold through Laugh.com. Is that basically like a label partnership, but you own everything?

Johnny: Exactly. Laugh.com is a great website with guys like George Carlin and Milton Berle all the way to Seinfeld and young comedians today. And then to have The Jerky Boys there *featured* is pretty staggering. Milton Berle's nephew was very instrumental in bringing us in, and it's been nice and very different.


Johnny Brennan poses with the little voices that live inside his head.

HITCH: Do you make calls every day of your life?

Johnny: Aw, no. This is stuff I do as long as the fans are there. I just did a Virgin Megastore signing in New York, and I had an 80-year-old woman and her husband tell me, "This is the funniest stuff I've ever heard in my life, and as long as you keep making these, I am there for you." Then on the other hand, you have little 8- and 10-year-old kids there with their parents, and you tell them, "You know, you gotta watch the language on this one," and the parents say, "He hears worse at home."

But to answer your question, no. I just make the calls when it's time to do a new CD. I try to have them out about every year and a half.

HITCH: Do you know what you're going to say beforehand? And how do you pick who you call?

Johnny: No, everything is total spontaneity, no scripting at all. Everything is fly by the seat of your pants. It's so much better flying blind.

Sometimes, I'll just say "Shoot me a number" and I'll call. Or I'll put my finger on the Yellow Pages. It's worked well for us. You know, after the first album was such a hit, there was a lot of pressure on us to not flop with the

second release, and hit No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Heatseekers chart. So for the third one, I wondered what else I could do, so I thought about placing classified ads to get incoming calls, to reverse this process, and that took off.

HITCH: But one drawback to the success has to be getting recognized by some callers. Does that ever happen?

Johnny: Yeah, it happens a lot, actually. But a lot of people can't really believe it's Frank Rizzo calling them. They'll think it's their dad or their brother – somebody in the family putting them on. But if somebody's joking or having fun with it, there's no point in continuing. I need people to be screaming back. I need people who are ready to fight at the drop of a hat.

"I need people to be **screaming** back. I need people who are ready to **fight** at the drop of a hat."

HITCH: Like the Flower Lady on your new album. Do you have to get people's permission to include them?

Johnny: Yeah, and the Flower Lady's a funny story there. My manager gets the releases – I don't do any of that – and when he went there and she found out, she went after him with a kitchen knife! The police were called. She was so enraged. In the end, he didn't press charges, gave her a couple bucks and he got the release.

But most of the time, it's very cool. When they find out, some of the older people are like, "I don't believe this! My grandkids know who you are, and they think you're great!" When they understand the joke, that they're part of this *Candid Camera*-type thing, they're much more open-minded. And some have asked that I give to their favorite charity in exchange for a release, so I'm happy to do that.

HITCH: Are your characters based on real people or all your creation?

Johnny: They are all based on people. Like Frank Rizzo, the Long Island James Cagney type? He's very close to my father when he would get pissed off. Sol Rosenberg is my mom and an uncle mixed together. Kissel, that's my old uncle Vinnie, a World War II veteran. Gay guys, I had an Uncle Thomas who was gay. These are all things I picked up when I was a kid growing up. I started doing these voices when I was just 5 or 6.

HITCH: When did you start putting them to good use with the calls?

Johnny: Oh, I was about 16 or 17. I loved these characters, and put them to tape on a reel-to-reel, but it was missing something. Then I thought, if I could get them to interact with people, I might have something.

So I've been doing these characters for 20 years. I don't do the calls that often, but it's like wildfire.

HITCH: Do you have a day job?

Johnny: My day job is taking care of my daughter and just preparing for all my projects. I'm a hired gun for my voice, in a way. I'm doing a couple voices for the cartoon *Family Guy* on Fox, which is really great.

HITCH: How come it seems like you do all the work? Kamal doesn't seem to do much.

Johnny: I do it all, actually. Kamal left about four years ago. It wasn't really his thing. Like Tarbash, the Indian character? He didn't want to do it – which is funny, because he's Indian – because he was afraid his dad was going to get pissed at him. I had to make him do it. He didn't really want to be a part of it anymore and last I heard, he had directed a documentary on Hell's Kitchen, which I thought was pretty good.

HITCH: Was the split acrimonious?

Johnny: Uh, he just didn't like his position in the group. He didn't like that everyone always talked about Frank Rizzo and not Tarbash. But you know, I couldn't turn my back on the fans. I said, "Kamal, you know, you gotta do what you gotta do. It's nothing personal."

HITCH: Let's talk about *The Jerky Boys Movie*. I've liked all your CDs, but I've got to admit, I did not like the movie at all.

Johnny: Really? You know, I get just the opposite. Yeah, there were so many more crazy things I wanted to do to make it funnier and some of it got toned down, but it's got a cult following like you wouldn't believe. It's always on cable and it just rents insane. I still get letters from fans about it.

HITCH: So even though it wasn't received well by the general public, is it something you'd do again?

Johnny: For its time and for what it was, I gotta tell you, I had a blast. I just played a police chief for this movie that Insane Clown Posse did called *Big Money Hustlers*. Harland Williams was in it, too, and it was a lot of fun.

HITCH: What's next?

Johnny: I'm starting work in a couple months on a Christmas album. It's gonna be called *Sol Rosenberg's Christmas Bash*, just like the old Perry Como records with him sitting in front of the fire. One of the calls is Sal calling because his menorah exploded on him.

HITCH: Do you plan to do this for the rest of your life or do you see an end?

Johnny: As long as the fans are there and the letters keep coming in, I'll keep doing it. It's a great thing to spread humor and you wouldn't believe some of the letters I get – some that touch my heart. I hear from people whose families are going through cancer or whatever, and my stuff helps them through. Because it's all about laughing. I have a great time with it.

HITCH: Are there any calls you won't do? It seems like you have no fear.

Johnny: Obviously, I don't want to do anything like tie up EMS lines, where someone could get hurt. But outside of that, no. You know, I don't rely on the phone call; I like to find the humor *inside* the call with the characters. I don't do shock value, either, because anyone could do that. That's been done a million times.

H

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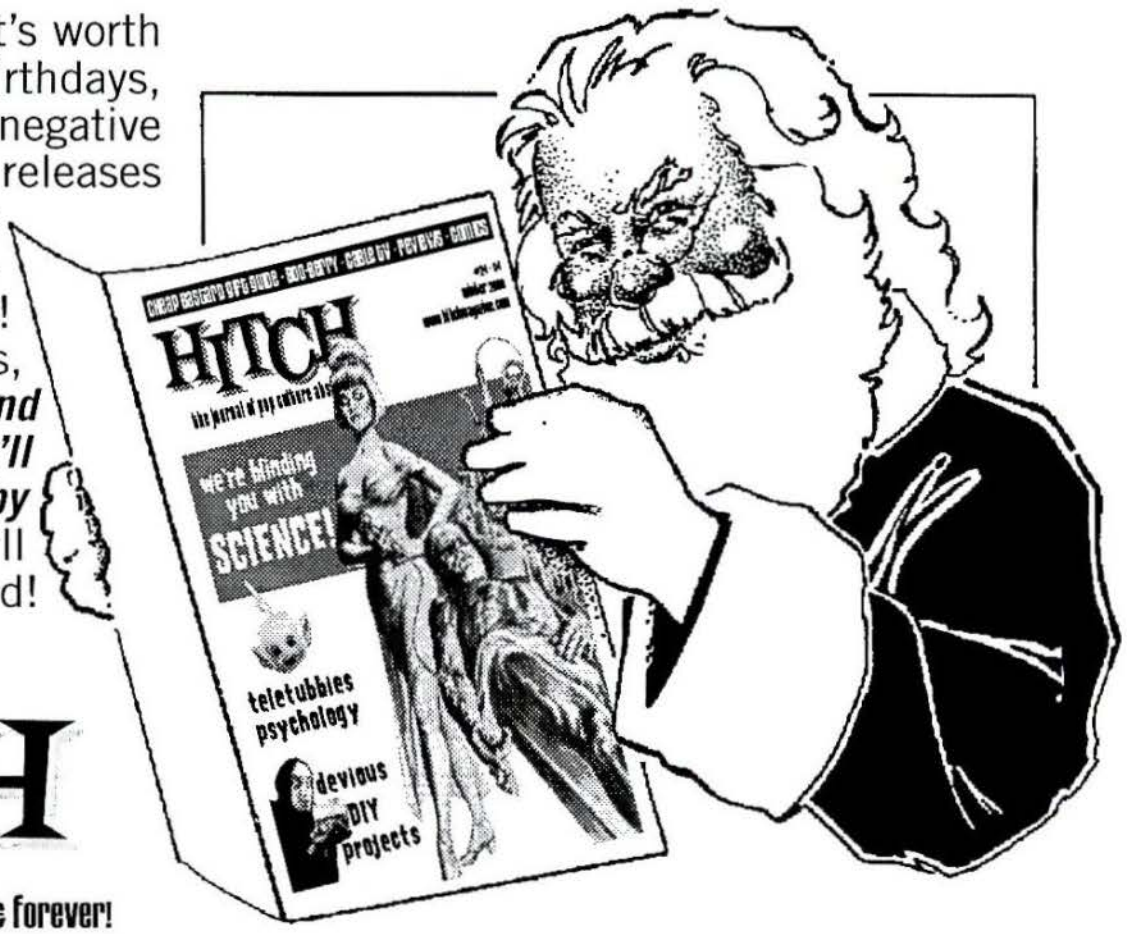


HITCH

the journal of pop culture absurdity ... now & forever!

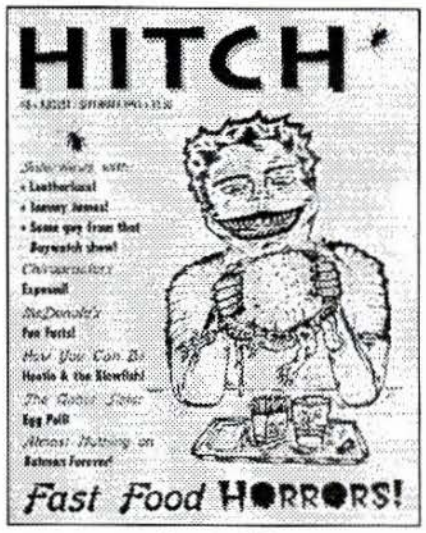
GET HITCHED WITH THESE BACK ISSUES!

#8 / AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 1995 – You'll never eat out again after reading our report on fast food horror stories. Stand in awe of our three celebrity interviews: Leatherface from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, Tommy James from The Shondells and some buff guy from *Baywatch*. Plus, a he-man adventure to a quack chiropractor, the McDonald's FAQ, the Hootie-O-Matic and how to get tons o' chicks. 44 pages (four of them in bright, headache-inducing orange!) in all. For an issue this old, I'm surprised we have any left, but we do.

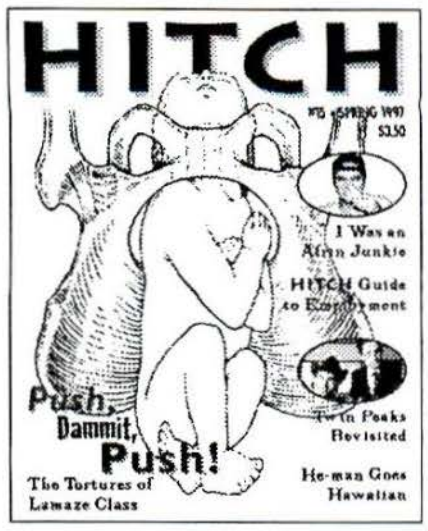
#9 / OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 1995 – Who cares if the cover story is on summer movies of '95? It's still funny. As are Rod's attempts at becoming an underwear model, our first-person tale of being a habitual blood donor, a look at country music cuties, drugstore horror stories, federally funded fun facts and we get blown off by one-half of The Monkees (and exact our revenge in print). 44 pages in all, and still one of our all-time best. Maybe that's why we only have a few left.

#10 / DECEMBER 1995 / JANUARY 1996 – Our much-beloved Travel Issue! Take a trip with us to Dallas' JFK conspiracy convention, Oregon's scariest family fun park and various roadside freak shows! Plus, an interview with a chick from *Road Rules*, dirty Disney, some Batchat with Adam West, the Tweed-O-Matic and something we'll just call "your rectum, your friend." 44 pages in all. This is the issue that very nearly cost Rod his day job, so shouldn't you have it for that reason alone? Maybe a lucky few of you will, as that's all that's left in the ol' closet.

#15 / SPRING 1997 – Take a he-man adventure to Hawaii, dig in to the joys of Lamaze class and get a job with our exclusive HITCH Guide to Gainful Employment. Plus, there's a not-at-all-complete episode guide to that Saturday-morning '70s favorite *Shazam!*, confessions of a nose spray addict, a look back at *Twin Peaks* and how to be a stand-up comedian. 64 fat pages in all. We accidentally ordered an extra box of these, but please do not take that as an indicator of poor quality, as you'd be wrong. *Wrong,* we tell you!



Issue #8



Issue #15

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disc dish

edited by Rod Lott

cd of the moment

Vincent Clarke & Martyn Ware
Spectrum Pursuit Vehicle
(Mute)

Concept ambient albums often fail because the concept itself is ultimately flawed in the first place. But here's one that not only works, it may spark some good-natured jealousy in Steve Reich, Philip Glass and Brian Eno as well! The unlikely team of Erasure's Clarke and Haircut 17's Ware join together for a true *tour de force*, intended "to promote profound relaxation. It is best experienced with the use of headphones, and at the point of near-sleep at the end or the beginning of the day." I don't know why anyone would *want* to go to sleep during this, even though you certainly could, because it achieves it stated goal so well, and not because it's boring. Divided into six segments – each titled with a different color and representing a different location – the pieces blend together almost imperceptibly, save for one sound that represents the intended locale. For example, the heavenly "White" uses harps, the beach-set "Yellow" employs waves and the womb-like "Red" a heartbeat. Also taking us on a journey underwater (with lots of bubbles) and in a forest, *Spectrum Pursuit Vehicle* is a real delight. When this was performed live (only once), it was done so in a room covered with white cloth, with the colors of the titles programmed to cross-fade unnoticeably throughout the event. That would have been something to see, but this aural record is an experience all its own.

LIKE IT? TRY...

- Brian Eno: *Another Green World* (EG)
- *Wired Magazine Presents: Music Futurists* (Rhino)
- Steve Reich: *Music for 18 Musicians* (Nonesuch)
- Erasure: *ABBA-Esque* (Sire)

STILL SPINNING

- Stephen Malkmus: *Stephen Malkmus* (Matador)
- The Mercury Program: *All the Suits Began to Fall Off* (Tiger Style)
- Imitation Electric Piano: *Imitation Electric Piano* (Drag City)
- *Traffic*: Soundtrack (TVT)

rock

Asa Cruz
Pop Star
(Sundown)
Upon first listen, this may sound like barely passable hard rock with a pop sheen, but the awful vocals kick in and reveal it for the pap it is. The title track may be the best on the album, but that's no compliment. Ultimately, this is music for guys who wear eye shadow *by* guys who wear eye shadow.

The Tyde
Once
(Orange Sky)
This West Coast-based sextet features that granola-hippie look that I hate and the '60s-pop sound that I love. Its strong harmonies become immediately evident with the euphoric wave that opens "All My Bastard Children," a expertly written tune sporting vocals that recall Bob Dylan's heyday. Subsequent tracks channel Byrds melodia without sounding too retro or too contemporary, a feat that few are able to pull off, and Wilco is one of them. Now we can add The Tyde to that short list.

Aspera
Sugar & Feathered
(Big Wheel Recreation)
Super-spacey psychedelic rock that will alternately scare you and draw you in to its web of distorted guitars, harpsichords and spooky vocals that are seemingly undecipherable, yet haunting nonetheless. "Say Say Good Bye Bye" and "Tiptoe Breaker" remind me of The Cure on a good day, but Sheena Easton fans (myself included) will be angered to learn that the song "Sugar Walls" is *not* a cover of the Scottish beauty's 1986 hit. *–LF*

Mark Eitzel
The Invisible Man
(Matador)
Admit it: You never thought you'd hear the former American Music Club frontman singing behind shuffling beats that seem straight out of an EBTG track. But as *The Invisible Man* begins, that's exactly what we get … and I like it! His previous LP, *Caught in a Trap…*, was a stripped-down, virtually acoustic affair that hasn't held up well on repeated listenings, but this effort seems stronger for both today and tomorrow.

Ashley Park
The American Scene
(Darling/Kindercore)
Another solid baroque-pop offering from one-man show Terry Miles, here found traipsing across the countryside in the golden afternoon sun, no doubt with Brian Wilson flowing through the earpieces of his Walkman. The influence of the High Llamas' Sean O'Hagan – aka the latter-day Wilson – also is evident, perhaps even more than on last summer's AP offering, the exquisite *Town and Country*. Miles' tunes are sunny, sparkly and original – even down to the cover of Neil Young's "Tell Me Why." This *Scene* is an easy pick-me-up.

Super XX Man
Volume V
(Post-Parlo)
Who says white people don't have soul? Scott from Austin's Silver Scooter goes solo again on the heels of SS' latest, and damned if he doesn't raise the bar! Good as the Scooter is at smart, easy-going pop, Scott seems to wrangle a ton more melody by his lonesome, as is clear from the get-go of "Generosity." That he manages to do so with half the instrumentation is more remarkable.

Carlos
Devil's Slide
(Amazing Grease)
I feel sorry for all those who were lamenting Weezer's hiatus, because all that time they could have been listening to Carlos, a very capable heir to the nerd-rock throne. *Devil's Slide* is one of those rare albums that quietly rocks and actually pulls it off. Just about every song is a winner, with the hair-band serenade "Heavy Metal Monday" and the peppy "Pan

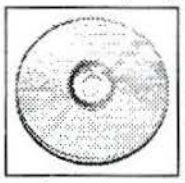
Electric" as the best cuts. —*LF*

Rita Chiarelli
Breakfast at Midnight
(Northern Blues)
Eleven four-minute reasons why white people should never *ever* play the blues. In what is basically a by-the-book copy of Bonnie Raitt, Rita actually uses the word "razzamatazz" seriously in the song "Midnight in Berlin." I don't know about you, but when I think of Berlin, I think of jackboots, mid-'70s Bowie and cold, reptilian art films, not words like "razzle-dazzle." C'mon, America: We've taken so much from the black man, let's let him keep blues music. After all, you have John Cougar Mellencamp to chronicle your troubles! –*LF*

Gorillaz
Gorillaz
(Virgin)
For the hippest in hip-hop, look no further than Gorillaz, a four-piece combo comprised of animated characters. That's the concept, anyway; in reality, it's yet another all-star project masterminded by Dan the Automator, whose Handsome Boy Modeling School, Deltron and *Bombay the Hard Way* discs were mere appetizers. Most notable among the guests is Blur's Damon Albarn, whose throaty vocals lend copious amounts of cool to the melodic party. Four tracks into it, I was wondering why all four tracks weren't already hits. Enemies of rap (myself included) should not be frightened.

Ghosts and Vodka
Precious Blood
(Six Gun Lover)
Further proof you can't judge a book by its cover: I was prepared to hate – nay, *loathe* – this offering from Ghosts and Vodka based upon its disgusting and disturbing back cover art, which seeps throughout the packaging inside as well. But as soon as I pressed play, my expectations were turned upside-down. The opener, "Andrea Loves Horses," is even – *gasp!* – pretty and moving. The rest of *Precious* has more bite, but presented as instrumentals, they're powerful without being off-putting. G&V has a keen sense of working the melody into the instrumentation, which just never lets up. Similarly, it will be tough for you to let go.

The Invisible Men
Come Get Some
(Dionysus)
From refugees of The Bomboras and The Ghastly Ones comes The Invisible Men, whose music is anything but imperceptible. It's in-your-face surf-punk – loud, raucous and non-stop. Which would be all fine and good if the vocals didn't flat-out suck. (Maybe it's all the pot, which they thank in the liner notes.) The music itself is energetic and dandy; I only wish I could listen to it with an "instruments-only" option.



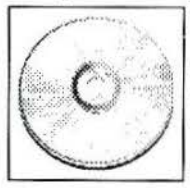
The Beta Band
Hot Shots II
(Astralwerks)
I'm a huge fan of the Betas' first disc – the universally acclaimed *Three E.P.'s* compilation – and I liked their self-titled follow-up as well. But *Hot Shots II*, I'm afraid to report, is a bit of a letdown. Despite the jokey name, the album does not capture the band at its usual fun and loopy self. Only the first track, "Squares" bears any fruit – most of the rest just comes across too … well, sleepy and languid. Any Beta devotee looking for the next "Dry the Rain" is not apt to find it here.

Visions of Disorder
From Bliss to Devastation
(TVT)
The packaging for this metal-rock offering is littered with pictures of maggots, which I think pretty much says it all. But I'll go on anyway. To me, this style of music is all the same from one artist to the next – an observation compounded by the fact that all the vocalists grunt and scream as if they're purposely trying to tear up their throat. And hey, did I mention the maggots?

Betty Blowtorch
Are You Man Enough?
(Foodchain)
Apparently, I am not. I'm sick of the recent metal resurgence, and just because this particular metal band is all chicks doesn't mean I'm going to cut them any slack. It's shit, designed for shock value and void of anything interesting, musically or otherwise (unless you're into reading lyrics purely for comedic value). Vanilla Ice raps on one cut about his "10 inches" (*snicker*), which makes the album even more pathetic on so many levels.

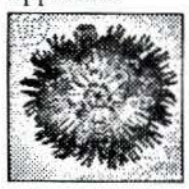
Belle and Sebastian
Sing … Jonathan David
(Matador)
Those moody, Scottish cult popsters go baroque with a three-song CD single full of Left Banke harmonies and feisty organ licks. While it's no surprise the work is good, some may be caught off-guard that "Jonathan David" is far from somber or suicidal; in fact, it may be one of their uppiest songs yet. "Take Your Carriage Clock and Shove It" treads more familiar ground, lightly and with gorgeous strings. Personally, I'll take the rainy-day sound of "The Loneliness of a Middle Distance Runner" over them both. On second thought, I'll be content to take anything this band does at this point.

The Pedestrians
An Evening at "Pearl's" Hurricane
(Bacchus/Dionysus)
Tucson, Ariz.'s first punk show – from 1979 – is preserved for posterity with a cover-heavy 22-song lineup. Of those, only a few are Pedestrian originals. The rest are guaranteed audience-starters like Rolling Stones' "Under My Thumb," The Ramones' "Rock 'n' Roll High School" and even the "Batman Theme." Most notable is the irreverent (and perhaps even downright disrespectful) rendition of "Heartbreak Hotel." Familiarity doesn't breed contempt, but comfort, as Devo, Elvis Costello, Wire, The Zombies and Iggy Pop also get covered in an okay concert whose lack of sound quality puts a damper on its apparent energy.

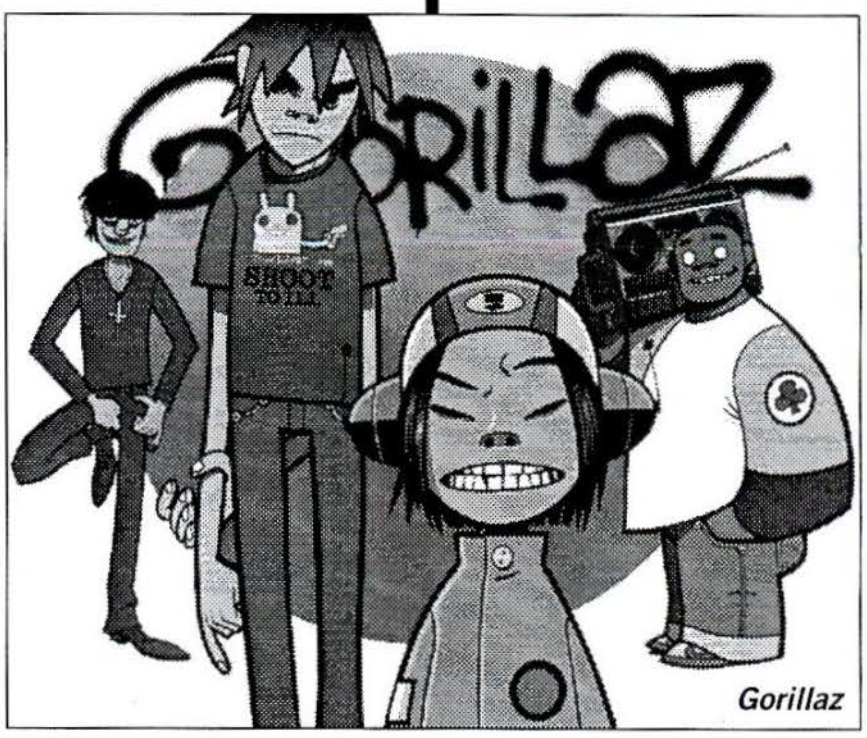


RX Bandits
Progress
(Drive-Thru)
Very capable ska-ish punk band from Orange County, California with an enjoyable hook in every song and a political message for all to enjoy. Most of the songs are of the Sublime ilk, not that there's anything wrong with that. "Status" could be a great breakthrough single. –*LF*

Default
The Fallout
(TVT)
TVT's latest Alice in Chains wannabe lets loose with *The Fallout*, and while it's not as outwardly annoying as other young hard-rock acts, it offers not a damn thing new, either. At least the production is such that it doesn't muddy up the sound, allowing you to hear each actual instrument being played, as opposed to usual hammered-skull approach.



Iffy
Biota Bondo
(Foodchain)
"Iffy" is right, as this Smash Mouth/Fun Lovin' Criminals-esque offering alternates between songs good and bad. Heavy on the funk and beats, *Biota Bondo* boasts

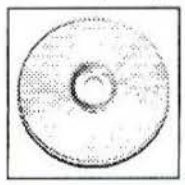


Gorillaz

strong single material in "Sweet Stuff" and the *Shaft*-like "Superbad Girl," but stumbles for every stair it climbs. It's a party record, for sure, but remember that some parties are lamer than others. Iffy – not too spiffy.

Jim Collins
The Church of Gary Numan: A Dark Celebration
(J.C.)

Ohio's Jim Collins is such a Numan fan that he recorded an entire album of covers on his own, handling all instruments and vocals. What he ended up with sounds like a total pro job, covering Numan in various styles, from rock to techno. To his credit, he doesn't perform note-for-note renditions, trying something a little different. My favorite is the clever, laid-back jazz instrumental take on "Cars." I must admit that outside of the hit "Cars," my knowledge of Numan is nonexistent, so I can't call myself a fan – heck, next to Collins, who can? – but the work here is quite polished and good.



Erik Sanko
Past Imperfect, Present Tense
(Jetset)

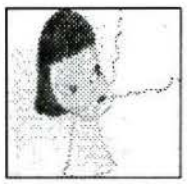
Imperfect is just that – somewhat interesting but not particularly compelling either way. Former Skeleton Key Sanko's songs are best described as wee and sleepy, and he has the voice to match. But while I don't mind lethargic music, the vocals are another story altogether. Occasionally there are moments of comparative energy, such as the *faux*-country jam of "That Train," but it's not enough to qualify for a reservation-less recommendation.

cKy
Volume 1
(Island)

AAAARGH!!! MY EARS! MY EARS!!! MY INTELLECT! MY INTELLECT!!!

Black Box Recorder
The Worst of Black Box Recorder
(Jetset)

Before you snipe, yes, the title is self-depreciating. This actually may be the virgin listener's best introduction to the UK trio, as it collects all the band's singles, B-sides and remixes. It begins with their clever cover of "Seasons in the Sun" (clever in that they make you wait 'til the very end for the chorus), a fine example of why Sarah Nixey's ghostly vocals are so winning and seductive. "The Facts of Life" is represented here by a remix by members of Pulp, sprinkled with a liberal dose of sex-ed movie dialogue. The real treat, however, lies in the four music videos included on the disc; it makes one wish MTV got some balls and played stuff like this, not that they play videos anymore at all.



The Busy Signals
Pretend Hits
(Sugar Free)

Pretend Hits is as apt a title as any, as radio wouldn't dare touch pop like this, although it'd be a better world if it would. These loopy, leapy numbers carry the same kind of slacker vibe as, say, Bran Van 3000 or early Beck, but with a bit more ambition. This is evident on "The Freeway," with a sound not unlike the Elephant 6 collective and the should-be-a-single "The New You." Why they chose to muck up a couple of perfectly fine tracks with rap vocals is beyond me, though.

Donna De Lory
Bliss
(Secret Road)

A former backup singer for Madonna goes her own way on *Bliss*, and while she's no Madonna, she's not trying to be, either. Staking out her own route, De Lory takes a quiet journey that emphasizes her breathy, ethereal vocals. It's a shame the accompanying music is a little too slick for a voice that refined; otherwise, we'd have something on a Cocteau Twins-level of greatness.

The Moore Brothers
Colossal Small
(Amazing Grease)

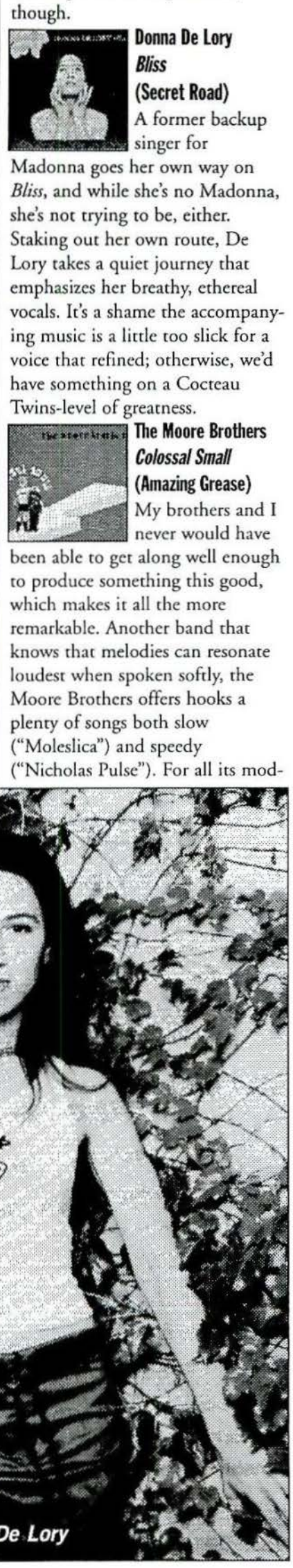
My brothers and I never would have been able to get along well enough to produce something this good, which makes it all the more remarkable. Another band that knows that melodies can resonate loudest when spoken softly, the Moore Brothers offers hooks a plenty of songs both slow ("Moleslica") and speedy ("Nicholas Pulse"). For all its modern-day irony, a lot of the instrumentation seems rooted in the '60s pop arena, for which we say, "Hooray!"

Om Attack
Heavy Rescue
(InnerSPACE)

This is sort of like progressive rock without the pretension (or, one presumes, the hair). But while it's long on the music, it's short on hooks that usually power this genre. A bit more spacey than most, it does find its footing in well-crafted instrumentation, but fails to make an impression that qualifies as lasting.

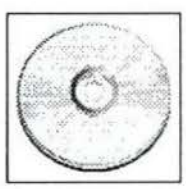
Edith Frost
Wonder Wonder
(Drag City)

A voice this mighty in its own wee way can only from Texas. Sure enough, Frost hails from the Lone Star State and pays tribute to it on the foot-tapping "Cars and Parties." Intelligently written, it could be an anthem if it weren't smartly buoyed by somber strings. The rest of *Wonder Wonder* is comparatively downbeat, comprised of quiet folk songs with a twisted wit. The title track is wonderfully disorienting, while "Dreamers" is simply gorgeous.



Donna De Lory

soundtrax



Street Mix: Music from VW Commercials
(Volkswagen)

Those enterprising bastards at Volkswagen finally caught on and released a compilation of all the cool songs from their TV spots, including works from Stereolab, Spiritualized, Hooverphonic and Nick Drake. Of course, the enterprising Napster user in you – and me – may have already burned such a collection more than a year ago, thus rendering this superfluous.

Snackbar Confidential Presents Cheesy Listening Vol. 1
(Snackbar Confidential)

The celebrated cut-and-paste zine unearths lots of '70s fun for its first homemade compilation CD. The bulk of the disc is comprised by the soundtrack to the Russ

Meyer/Roger Ebert epic *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, with songs presented in both their film and LP versions. You also get themes from *Barbarella*, *Mad Monster Party*, *Josie and the Pussycats* and *Lancelot Link*. Plus, if that ain't enough, sandwiched in between are radio spots for various AIP films (*Tentacles*, *Frogs* and *Destroy All Monsters* among them) and closing the proceedings is Burt Bacharach's all-but-lost theme for *The ABC Movie of the Week*. As much of these tracks are "found," quality is not always pristine, but that adds to the fun. Sold collector-to-collector for $9.99 cash to cover only the cost of materials and postage, you can get yours from P.O. Box 895, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

Tomb Raider
Music from the Motion Picture
(Elektra)
Blockbusters starring Angelina Jolie may lack substance, but their soundtracks usually don't. Case in point: *Tomb Raider*, which is at least as good (if not better) than her last, *Gone in 60 Seconds*. In fact, the two discs share several artists, including Groove Armada, The Chemical Brothers, BT and Moby, whose new "Ain't Never Learned" represents more of an old-school style than his recent *Play* output. U2 takes center stage with a remix of their hit "Elevation," setting the electro-rock tone carried out admirably by Fatboy Slim, Fluke, Leftfield and Delerium. Also like *Gi60S*, *Tomb Raider* throws out a couple of rap cuts – here from Outkast and Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott – that are best avoided and bring down the quality of the overall album.

Una Sull'altra

Original Motion Picture Soundtrack
(Dagored)
Riz Ortolani's score to the Lucio Fulci film is quite schizophrenic, but in a good way. The title cut is wild, swinging, unrestrained jazz, directly followed by the mellow, near-Mancini-like "Susan and Jane." Though each track sounds a bit different, it manages to form a cohesive whole as well. I haven't a clue what the movie's about, but based upon the music (and okay, the cover), it's got to be great. Fans of that swank '60s cinematic sound *a la* Ennio Morricone will be pleased.

swank

Hava Narghile: Turkish Rock Music, Vol. 1
(Bacchus/Dionysus)
While it's not quite as far-out as its cover implies, this 22-track collection of Turkish musical gems from 1966 to 1975 is a nice surprise. You may not comprehend the words coming from the mouths of bands like Baris Manço and Kaygisizlar, but the music needs no translation. It's mostly whacked-out psychedelic rock with acid leanings and hookah puffs. A lot of it is also instrumental, many songs interestingly appropriating the American surf sound about a full decade after we did. As crazed as some songs are, the true winner is Yabancilar's "Agit," a soft, airy exotica piece that would have fit right in with Martin Denny's tiki-torch performances.

Morricone RMX
(Cinesoundz)
The work of one of cinema's master composers gets the remix treatment from top electronic artists, in a compilation approved by Morricone himself. Purists should best just stay away, but those who want to have some fun will find it in Apollo Four Forty's reworking of the spaghetti western classic "The Man with the Harmonica," Fantastic Plastic Machine's "Belinday May" and Thievery Corporation's cool "Il Grande Silencio." Others working their magic are Nightmares on Wax and Groove Corporation.

Die Moulinettes
Alpha Bravo Charlie
(S.H.A.D.O.)
Introduced to my ears by S.H.A.D.O.'s *Harpsichord 2000* compilation, Die Moulinettes follow it up with an album of their own that's really like two discs in one. The first eight tracks – bubbly, Stereolab-lite numbers all – are then followed by eight remixes, twiddled and twisted about by no less luminaries than Stereo Total, Valvola and The Maxwell Implosion. As airy and mindless as DM's originals are, it's their cover of Ennio Morricone's "Deep Down" (the title track from *Danger: Diabolik*) that will tickle your eardrums most. Personally, I found the remixes more enjoyable than the originals, and "Deep

Q+A
with Waldeck

Austria's Klaus Waldeck is preparing for a fall tour of Europe and perhaps the States in support of his sophomore LP, The Night Garden, *out now on E-Magine Music.*

How does this album differ from the last?
Waldeck: Basically, it's much better and more comprehensive and cohesive, although there are some elements from the previous album, like dub. I used more live musicians with this one, and that was quite interesting. At some point, you need something extra to entice you.

Your melodies are pretty rich on their own. Why add vocals?
Waldeck: That's a difficult question. Most of the time, vocals just add to a song. You get much more deeper in terms of an emotional level. With lyrics, you can create some sort of meaning and get people thinking in specific directions.

Are you a fan of electronic music or is it just a natural genre for your experimentation?
Waldeck: Well, for me, the term "electronic music" is a little misleading. Everyone uses electronic instruments. It's just a form of categorization. I like the downtempo, but I have to admit I became overfed with the "decor sound," the club sound using the same beats for five, six or seven years now. There's nothing new to that or creative about it.

So what kind of music excites you?
Waldeck: I'm quite open to any kind of music, really. Listening to house music in a club makes sense, but it's not something I'd listen to for pleasure. Classical music is great for chilling out in the car.

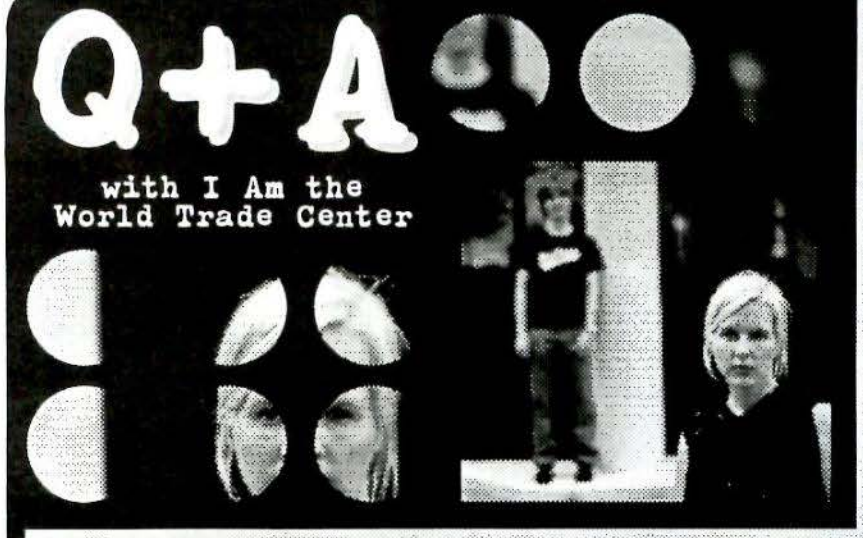
Do you tire of the Massive Attack and Portishead comparisons?
Waldeck: Massive Attack is one of my favorite bands. I could take it as a compliment, but sometimes, it's not. When you work in the same field, those comparisons come naturally. People drop a name here or there, and it's easier to describe music that way, but then again, it can be a problem.

What compelled you to cover the theme from Cat People*?*
Waldeck: I love the intro – not the whole song – just the intro, which is deep and dubby. I thought I could definitely make a version that added to it and emphasized the dub feeling.

Before you were a musician, you were a copyright lawyer. Which is your true love – music or law?
Waldeck: Music, obviously. I suppose you could do both, but you can't really go to a client and say, "I'm going on tour. You can call me in a month."

Q+A

with I Am the World Trade Center



The long-monikered I Am the World Trade Center is a guy (Dan Geller), a girl and a laptop computer. This simple combo has resulted in the terrific Out of the Loop *LP, out now on Kindercore Records.*

Was the shift from bubbly instrumentals to a vocal-based outfit intentional or accidental?

Geller: It was sort of both. I was working on "Holland Tunnel" and I thought, "This song could really use vocals." I didn't even know (my girlfriend) Amy could sing, but I asked her to do a vocal loop for it. There was something so perfect about it that I knew from that point on, Amy would sing for the band. I had been considering adding vocals, but I never knew the person I was looking for was right under my nose.

How does the writing process differ when you compose an album entirely on a computer?

Geller: It was actually really weird. I would write all the music as loops first and then sequence them. The record was almost done before Amy started singing, so she had to match melodies to the music that existed. If something needed rearranging, I would just cut and paste sounds where they needed to be.

Similarly, what obstacles does the all-on-computer present when playing live?

Geller: The first obstacle was figuring out how to use the computer since it is old and tends to crash. It soon became apparent that it was never going to work out. I bought a Roland 808 sampler; that is the heart of the live show. It has a bunch of toys built in like a theremin and a vocoder that we are able to have fun with.

Since the entire album was created on a computer, let's give that computer some credit. Fill us in.

Geller: It is a Gateway Solo 2500 laptop. I'm writing to you on it right now. It has all the Kindercore files on it. It is my business computer as well as my recording studio. It has no games on it.

Why the World Trade Center? What's wrong with, say, the Space Needle?

Geller: I really liked the names of Kindercore bands like Vermont and Of Montreal, so I was determined to have a geographic location in the name. I was naming all the landmarks in NYC and the World Trade Center came up. I said, "Yeah, then I could go on stage and say, 'I am the World Trade Center.'" Those words immediately stuck. And that was it!

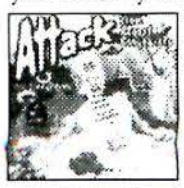
Since you are the World Trade Center, how are you holding up since that bombing several years ago?

Geller: I am fine. I get bombed on most weekends, too.

Down" gets a pair of them, courtesy of The High Llamas and the show-stopping DJ Me DJ You.

Gerardo Frisina
Ad Lib
(Schema)

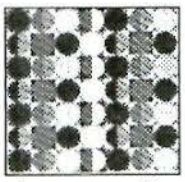
This is 100 percent pure cocktail music, the true likes of which we haven't heard in years. Leave it to the Italians, huh? *Ad Lib* opens with "Mas Eu Quer Ser," a jumping number that draws heavily from Brazilian influences, a sound that pops up throughout the album's ace 12 tracks. Organs pump, vibes glisten, birds chirp and if "Slow Burning" won't get you laid, my friends, nothing will.



The LoungeBots
Attack from Planet Gorgonzola
(MP3.com)

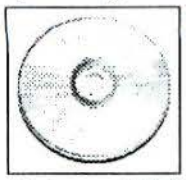
You can catch an easy Hawaiian breeze, a smoky jazz-club vibe or a Venusian who-knows-what from the LoungeBots' globe-trotting, planet-hopping sophomore disc. Standouts include the whistle-while-you-program "You're Steel the One," the electro-cha-cha-cha of "Ch-Ch-Cheese," the self-explanatory "Artificial IntelliJazz" and the hip-hop (C64-style, of course) number "Metal 2 Metal – Metal 2 Skin."

wired



Modular Systems
(ESL)

The third installment of ESL's "soundtrack" series showcases all seven of the label's acts, from founding fathers Thievery Corporation to newer acts like Thunderball, all contributing new or rare music. Among the highlights are the Corp.'s remix of Nicola Conte's sublime "Bossa Per Due," the Karminsky Experience remix of Ursula 1000's *Party*-inspired "Mr. Hrundi's Holiday" and Blue States' quiet single "Your Girl."



Deep House Culture: Choice NYC Garage
(Hypnotic)

Three discs of continuous mixes is likely overkill for any genre, but overly tiresome for one that does nothing for you. I've never been able to warm up to garage, a blend of house and soul, but it's big in the UK and NYC, I suppose. Here, DJs Skooby, Nissan and Ram each offer a disc of the stuff, incorporating the works of Goldie, Soul Katz and Yarbrough & Peoples, but none of it catches fire.

I Am the World Trade Center
Out of the Loop
(Kindercore)

A thoroughly fun and winning debut for IATWTC after teasing us with a few stellar cuts on the *Kindercore Fifty* compilation, *Out of the Loop* is a spaced-out, loopy, flute-ridden, booty-smacking, hip-shaking, head-bobbing, blood-pumping, juiced-up, drum-happy, go-for-broke dose of cosmopolitian electropop, composed entirely on a laptop for the complete and utter enjoyment of the most civilized sections of humanity on this world of ours. I hope I didn't just oversell it.

DJ Hardware
2001::A New Beginning
(POD)

While one would be quick to dismiss this a typical rave-fodder, DJ Hardware spins a pretty good party, and with two CDs and 20 long tracks, he better. Largely remixes of songs I've never heard before, *2001* is either great background music to fade out to or, if you're good looking, great to practice picking up the honeys at the club with. Fans of Sasha or Digweed will most definitely dig this. *–LF*

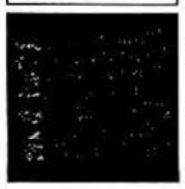
Momus
Folktronic
(Le Grand Magistery)

The ever-prolific Nick Currie releases his – what, *48th?* – album, this one a collection of what country music might sound like in the year 2049. The result is probably the most tolerable Momus record yet. It begins with "Appalachia," which approximates what Disneyland's Electric Main Street parade might sound like after being hit by a freak lightning storm. Come to think of it, most of the 20 (!) tracks sound that way, each with their own wacko-wired hillbilly flavorings. The craziness of the music is matched by the off-kilter lyric ("Jarre in Hickville" is full of 'em; the mere title of "Folk Me Amadeus" is a gem in itself), but why does Momus feel the need to sing about his penis all the time (here, "The Penis Song")? Perhaps out of compensation for shortcomings.

Future Groove Collection
(Mute)
The best of the UK Future Groove label is on one CD, and I for one, am quite glad. Mixed by Force Mass Motion, *Future Groove Collection* is basically just another mix CD, but truth is, it's quite infectious off the dance floor, just as much as I'm sure it is on. A good intro to the label, with pleasant surprises ranging from Polaris' jaunty "No More" to Vic20 & Sinclair's fight sequence starter "Nikita." *–LF*

Air
10,000Hz Legend
(Astralwerks)
Whereas *Moon Safari* was built on Bacharach, this proper follow-up is all Barry, John Barry … but darker. Even more prog than their soundtrack for *The Virgin Suicides*, *Legend* boasts a more guitar-driven sound, though the Moogs that made them famous are still there, too. A host of vocalists is employed for the proceedings, but the results don't have the panache of the collaborations with Beth Hirsch. Then again, these vocals were never meant to sound lovely like hers. Beck is the most famous, taking the harmonic reins of "The Vagabond" so tight that it sounds just like a Beck track. Buffalo Daughter work to lesser effect on "Sex Born Poison," but the lesser-known Jason Faulkner finds just the right '70s AM growl on "Radio #1," perhaps the poppiest of 11 tracks. I'm not sure quite what to make of the fellatio-focused "Wonder Milky Bitch," other than it wins the year's Best Song Title award, hands down. Lots of people will hate this, but if it were released under a new artist's name, they'd likely praise it.

Sistol
Sistol
(Phthalo)



Libyththh
Dizzolve a Diamond
(Phthalo)
Hmmmm ... I don't know. Sistol's *Sistol* comes off like very basic, very mellow Atari Teenage Riot—almost easy listening beeps and bloops. Like ATR, the squelches and squeaks have no rhyme or reason, but unlike ATR, they are not sonic jackboots to my skull. Sistol's mixes are more like subtle Keds gently patting my bottom. Usually, this kind of thing would annoy me, but I was relaxed and comforted by Sistol and his monotonous, constant noises. Meanwhile, labelmate Libyththh's sound reminds me of a state fair – it's fun at first with lots of whirling sounds, noise and colors, but eventually, you get sick from too much candy. I like what Libyththh is doing, I really do. They seem like a real talented bunch of fellas, but this is just so hard to kick back and listen to. It took me three times to make it all the way through. It's not bad, mind you, but a little bit goes a long, long way. *–LF*

The Bionaut
Lubricate Your Living-Room
(Matador)
A collection of tracks released in Europe between 1993 and 1997, Jörg Burger's Bionaut project has a lot more life to it than his work as The Modernist or one-half of Burger/Ink. It's a comedown cure-all that finds just the right balance between living room ambience and dance floor liveliness. "Electric Campfire" offers a taste of sauciness, while "P. Bateman" (an *American Psycho homage?*) comes off like an updated theme to *Halloween*, and it's all wrapped up in one quiet, pleasant package.

Air

Jean-Michel
New Medium Softpack
(Eleganz)
I hadn't heard anything quite like this since The Notwist unleashed its superb *Shrink* LP three years ago. Like that band, Jean-Michel is German and is fond of creating a beautiful, moody melody and dropping a watery track of beats right on top of it. Each track is tricky and quirky in its own enjoyable manner; few wilder than the bonus remix track. Icy goodness all around.

Various:03
Dancemusic: Modernlife
(V2)

Fashion TV: Spring-Summer 2001 Collection
(V2)
V2's *Various* series continues with *03*, a continuous, house-heavy mix from DJ Geoffe. This 10-track mix is notable for including the Clash-sampling, everywhere-but-here club hit "It's Gonna Be Alright," from the eyebrow-raising monikered Pussy 2000. The rest of the lineup is more American-friendly, with the ubiquitous Moby and electro-gods Underworld, whose "Cowgirl" hits the highest notes here. Rinocerose, Mandalay and Tinstar also make the cut, though the overall result is not as strong as the past two. Faring better is the label's other current compilation, *Fashion TV*, featuring music "straight from the runways." If that's truly the case, then the world of fashion is hipper than I thought. It begins with a smooth cover of the classic "Cry Me a River," by Illumination, and moves and grooves on with a Faze Action mix of Alex Gopher's wonderful "The Child," Rinocerose's ad-hit "La Guitaristic House Organisation" and, finally, the super-suave "Marie-Lou" by The Money Penny Project, whose work I'd love to hear more. Also strutting their considerable stuff are Smith & Mighty, Tosca, Ian Pooley and, yep, Moby.

Dntel
Early Works for Me If It Works for You
(Phthalo)

Phthalocyanine
Zachs
(Phthalo)
From Phthalo come two more experimental releases, courtesy of Dntel and Phthalocyanine. Short on vowels, Dntel is aka Jimmy Tamborello, and his music is dark, slightly unsettling, highly atmospheric and very, very cool. Often, his tunes resemble the heights of Boards of Canada, minus the spooky children's voices. The incredibly hard-to-say Phthalocyanine offers something entirely different, a cut-a-second clip affair, often sounding as

schizophrenic as its splattered-paint cover art. This one will try your patience, whereas Dntel's will grant you patience.

Kaleidoscopic Beats: Groove Anthology
(Indigo)

Mix CDs are becoming increasingly tiresome because of their sheer predictability, so when we get a good one, it's something to scream about. Here's something to scream about, and it's perhaps the finest mix disc since the *DJ Kicks* volumes from Kid Loco and Thievery Corporation. Compiled with cohesive care by German DJ Klaus Fiehe, *Kaleidoscopic Beats* begins with a foray into trip-hop with Ninja Tune's DJ Food and a Hefner mix of Klute's "Phone Call," before veering into hip-hop, best exemplified by the earth-moving funktitude of Rae & Christian's "Time to Shine." By the time you hit the space-rock section with the likes of Flying Saucer Attack, it's bliss – sheer bliss.

MVFS
Many Very Fine Songs '95-'99
(Aim)

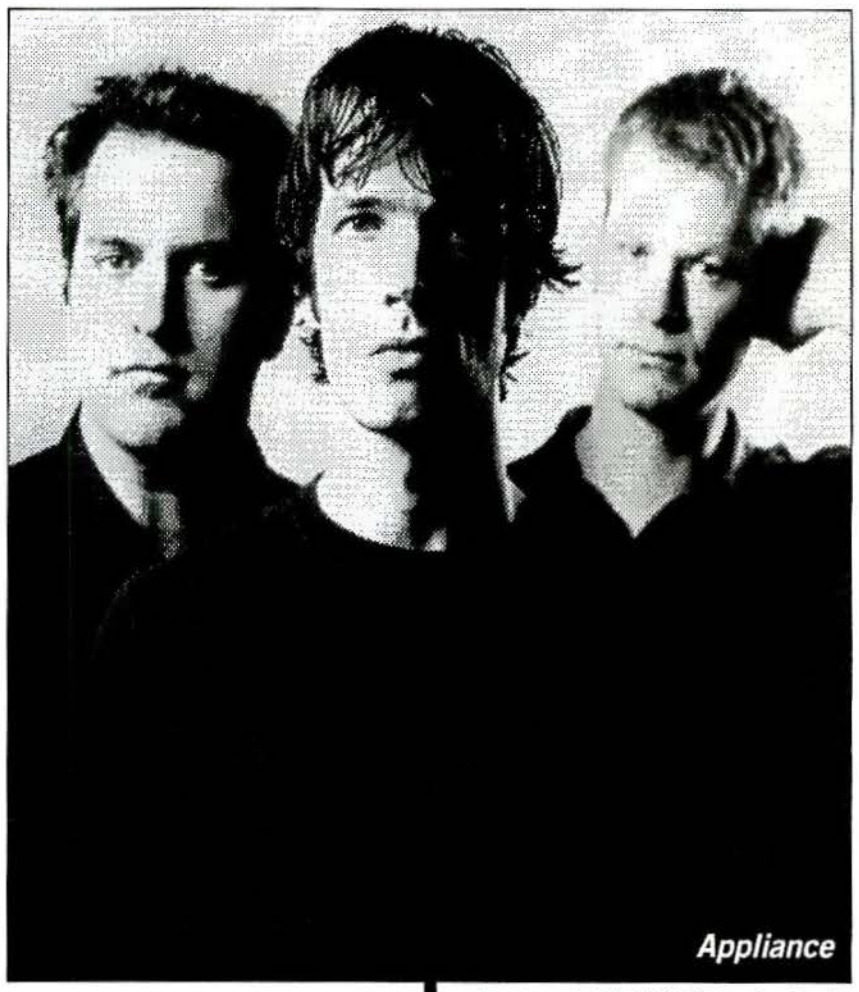
"Very fine" is only one person's opinion, of course, and it happens not to be mine. I'd characterize these quick, cut-'n'-paste ditties as "decent," but ultimately "disposable." Rapid-fire electronics has never been my cup of experimental-kinetic tea, but fans of that unique sound will drink up heartily. The partnership behind MVFS is now RIP, FYI.

Fluke
Progressive History X
(Astralwerks)

Anyone unfamiliar with this UK act's output beyond the hit singles "Atom Bomb" and "Absurd" are in for a real treat. This ten-year retrospective allows you to hear the band's early sound, before its big-beat-infused smashes – while it's still electronic, it's not nearly as aggressive and in-your-face, but I like it, most notably "Thumper." Hard to believe these guys have been going at it for a decade; let's hope we get another one of these 10 years from now.

Q-Burns Abstract Message
Invisible Airline
(Astralwerks)

It's been a while, but Q-Burns (aka M. Donaldson) returns with some new material that, as the title suggests, flies. Taking a cue from previous successes (in particular, "Jennifer"), many of the tunes solicit solid vocal contributions from guests, resulting in pleasant, beat-driven pop ("Innocent," with Lisa Shaw) to rollicking, funked-up blues ("Mother's Dead," with the authentic growl of Elmo Williams). If it seems like a calculated move to boost sales enjoyed by the likes of Moby and Fatboy Slim, good – he's a deserving talent.



Praga Khan
Mixed Up
(Antler-Subway)

The title could just as well refer to my state of consciousness after hearing the first few minutes of this remix album, which struck me like fingernails on a chalkboard. I wasn't exactly in love with Praga Khan's recent record, so the idea of an entire album of mixes isn't one I warmed to. One of the screeching mixes is subtitled "Where the Fuck Am I?" I wondered the same thing.

Phatt Phunk: Plugged In
(Phatt Phunk)

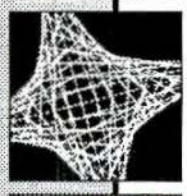
Andrew Clyne takes control of a mostly well-mixed set featuring artists from the California progressive label. Most of the best comes early on, with the deep dub sound of westCoastOwn and Seed, though the middle stretch is also interesting, comprised of two tribal-chant-driven tracks from Organic Vegetarian Liberation Front.

Waldeck
The Night Garden
(E-Magine)

If gardening were anything like this *Garden*, I'd have a new hobby. For his second album of trip-hop cool, Waldeck has fertilized his tunes with rich female vocals and a deep dose of dub. Goodness sprouts in the form of the sublime "Slowly," "Fallen Angel" and a cover of Giorgio Moroder and David Bowie's *Cat People* theme, done dub-style. Of course, one can't overlook the closer, "This Isn't Maybe," which graced an EP earlier this year. With its roots in a Chet Baker sample, it's even catchier and cooler than ever before. It

ff

Josie may fancy herself as an *Unkunvenshunal Girl* (Qwest/Warner), but the truth is, this slick, overproduced pop is as conventional and ready-for-radio as they come. The collection *Pure Cool* (Blue Note/Capitol) is just that, a terrific sampling of late-night jazz classics from Miles Davis, Chet Baker, Julie Christie and others. *Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms* (Jimmy Franks) from **Isabelle's Gift** was made possible by the leader of the Bloodhound Gang – 'nuff said. We received an advance of *Shades Apart* (Republic/Universal) by **Sonic Boom**, but it wouldn't play, so your guess is as good as ours, and we guess probably not worth the coin. The once-dead label Quango rises from the ashes with the sampler ***Music for a Global Culture***, sporting tracks from Jazzanova, Tosca and others that bode well for its future. **Philip Glass'** new score for the 1931 horror classic *Dracula* (Nonesuch) is haunting, appropriate and performed more than ably by Kronos Quarter. The festival souvenir ***All Tomorrow's Parties 1.0*** (ATP) features excellent rare tracks from Broadcast, Tortoise, Prefuse 73, The Sea and Cake, Yo La Tengo and Boards of Canada, as well as a couple of rap tunes to spoil the soup. As a downtempo compilation, the fully instructional ***Press Play*** (Instinct) is first-rate, with Kruder and Dorfmeister, Kid Loco, DJ Cam, Moodorama and Exodus Quarter – certainly nothing to sneeze at. **Afro Celt Sound System's** *Volume 3: Further in Time* (Real World) may be their best yet, containing their usual worldtronica jams alongside more conventional pop numbers with guest vocalists Peter Gabriel and Robert Plant. Except for one dreamy number from those Dandy Warhols, the ***crazy/beautiful*** soundtrack (Hollywood) is sucky/worthless. Get a taste of the indie Polyvinyl label's roster with the 19-track sampler ***Re Direction***, featuring AM/FM, Rainer Maria, Sunday's Best and others. It's yours for just $1 from P.O. Box 1885, Danville, IL 61834-1885. Tell 'em **HITCH** sent you.



may be Waldeck's finest hour, on this, his finest record to date.

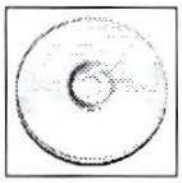
Appliance
Imperial Metric
(Mute)

I was introduced to Appliance via their *Six Modular Pieces* EP last year, which was a nifty little package – part Stereolab, part Barry Adamson. This full-length shifts that balance decidedly in the latter's favor, with a 12-track set that's far darker than one might expect. It's still good, mind you – just a different work than the past would lead you to believe. The strength of *Six*, I believe, lie in its instrumentals, and the same applies here; a quarter of the album falls into the vocal-free category, with "F.L.F." coming off like a Moroder tribute.

misc.

The Jerky Boys
The Jerky Tapes
(Laugh.com)

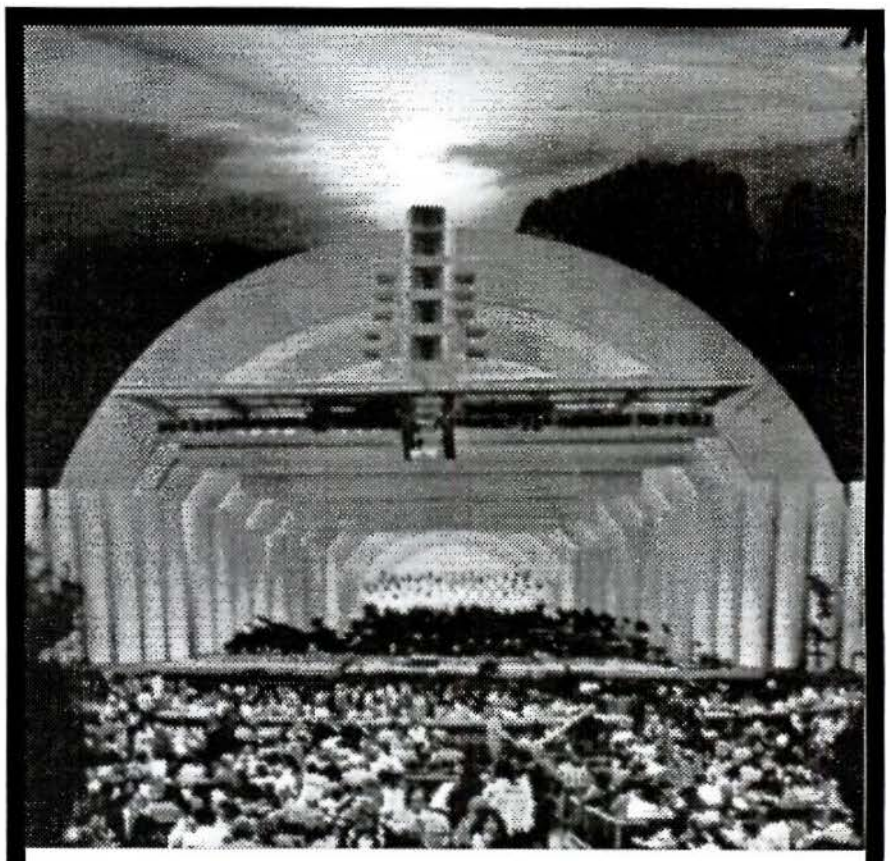
I honestly didn't expect a whole lot from this, but a couple of minutes after putting it in, I was flooded with memories of hearing the very first album and how unbelievably funny it struck me. This isn't the watershed moment that was, but it let me realize there's still a lot of life in this bit yet. Half the hour-long record is comprised of four conversations with the same Jewish flower lady, who tires of the Boys like you've never heard any of their victims tire before. Put short, this woman seems out for blood and the result is hysterical. It's possibly the first time you'll laugh more at what the victim says than the Boys themselves. Another choice moment is Johnny B.'s abrasive would-be football agent who claims he can get an average Joe a contract playing ball with the Yankees.



Hobby Broadcasting Presents: Shortwave Pirates of the '80s
(Hobby Broadcasting)

I'm not sure who wants to hear a series of station I.D.s, weather reports and test broadcasts. The repeat value strikes me as dangerously low.

H



cd of the moment, too

My Morning Jacket
At Dawn
(Darla)

I first popped this in on a boring Sunday night; it brightened it a bit, but I put it away for a few weeks. Then, I went to the doctor's office one afternoon, thinking this lump under my armpit was cancer. It wasn't, and I put this in on the ride back home. This time, it didn't just brighten my day – it set the bastard aflame! Now anytime I'm feeling overly good or overly bad, *At Dawn* goes in the slot. Trouble is, either I'm not driving far enough distances or maybe I just keep hitting the previous-track button too often, but I can't get past the first few songs, they're so damn gorgeous and good. People don't understand how a native Oklahoman like myself can hate country music, but I do. However, I do enjoy country sensibilities in a rock context, which is what the longful, vibe-bouncing wailings of "Lowdown" or "The Way That He Sings" do. And they do it so well, I can't hear them enough. I'm guessing the rest of *At Dawn* is as good, but at this point, it's moot. This is big, sweeping, airy Midwest music that moves my feet almost as much as my heart. The press release put it best: "It's almost biblical." *Almost?*

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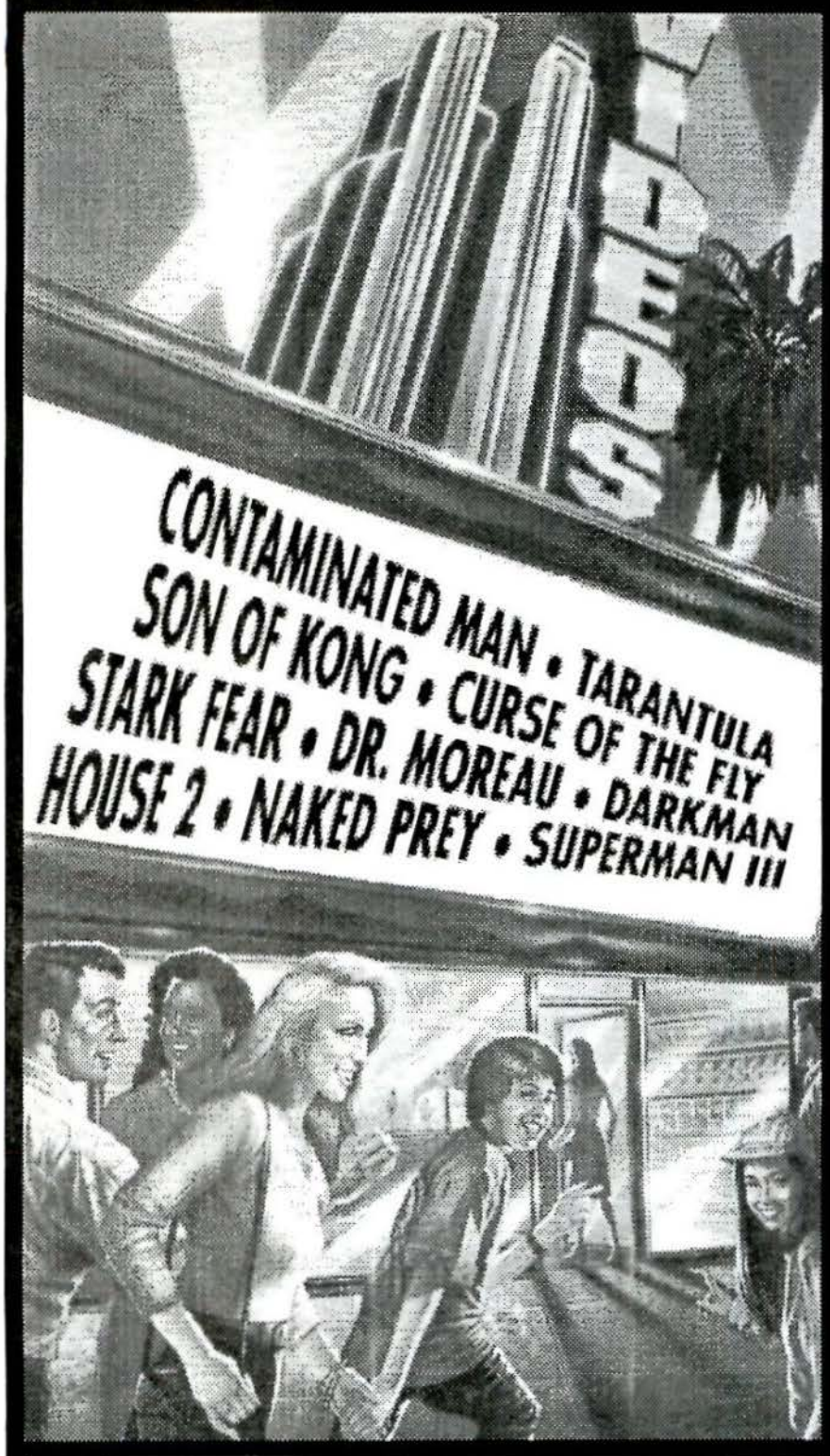


A WORD FROM THE MANAGEMENT...

Videos reviewed in **HITCH** receive star ratings based not on artistic merit, but on levels of enjoyment, from ★☆☆☆☆ (as much fun as a funeral) to ★★★★★ (fun, fun, fun 'til daddy takes the TV away).

RENT-O-MATIC

5 Funny Horror Comedies Other Than *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein*

- *Abbott & Costello Meet the Invisible Man* (1951, MCA/Universal Home Video)
- *Transylvania Twist* (1989, MGM/UA Home Video)
- *Young Frankenstein* (1974, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment)
- *Love at First Bite* (1979, Warner Home Video)
- *Book of Shadows: Blair Witch 2* (2000, Artisan Entertainment)

Japanarama! Volume Three
(2001)
Too Far East
★★★★★

Reality TV is all the rage in America right now, and none stand taller than CBS' almighty *Survivor*. But the country of Japan likes its reality TV a little – okay, *a shitload* – weirder, and I guarantee that if any enterprising network would import some of their bizarre and demented programming, the ratings would scream louder than the tribe has spoken.

Like the two previous outstanding volumes, the long-in-the-making and highly welcome *Japanarama! Volume Three* is nothing but two solid hours of "Psycho TV from Japan!" It gets kicking immediately, beginning with a brief, strobe-lit bit of guys handling women's bare breasts from behind, for no other reason than it's fun.

The women-as-sex-objects comprises damn near 90 percent of everything that hits Japan's airwaves, it seems. For instance, there's a game show where teams of short-skirted girls race to shimmy up a large, bendable pole to capture the flag up top. It's less a competition and more an excuse to televise panty shots. The phallic imagery all, *er*, comes to a, *um*, head when the flag is removed and the pole spurts smoke out its end!

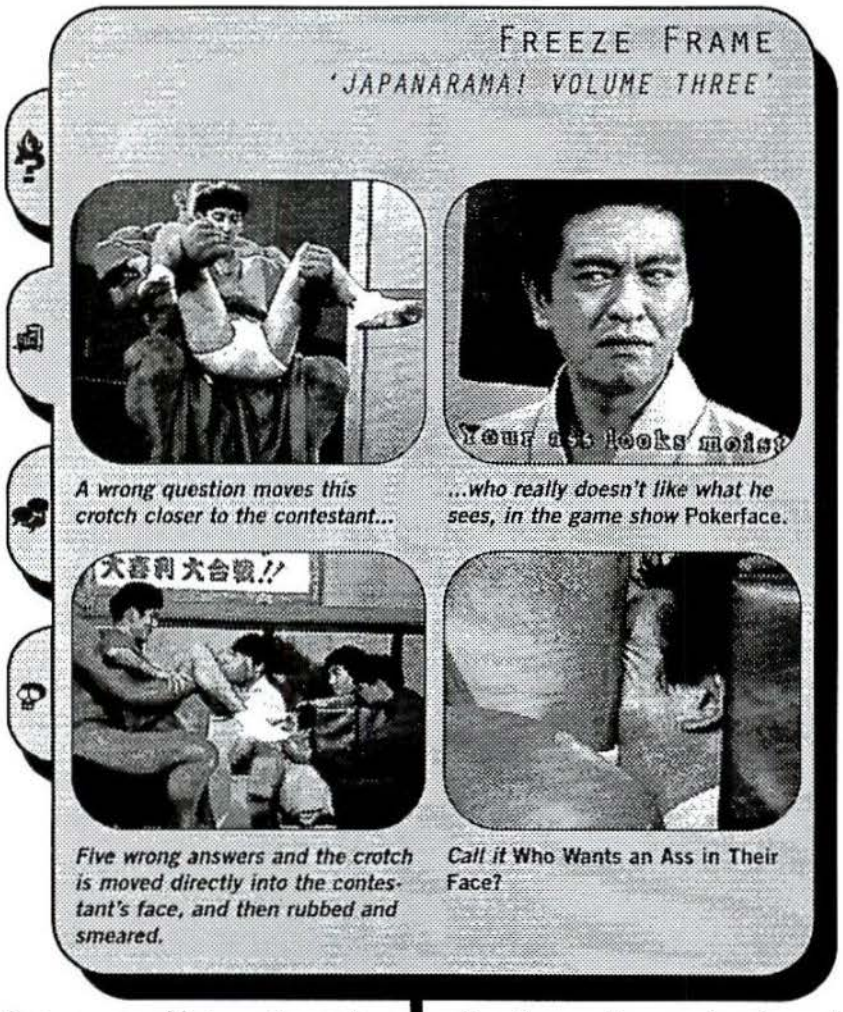
Super Jockey – featured extensively on previous *Japanarama!* Tapes – features the never-gets-old bit of having bikinied babes sit in tanks of scalding-hot water in exchange for commercial time. Another obstacle-course-type show requires gals to eat a Popsicle blowjob-style before moving on to the next task. And another merely puts them in tiny swimsuits and asks them to jump and run in place real fast. Much giggling ensues.

But it's not just the ladies who act like total fools. The men are given ample opportunity, too. Some are dressed up like possums – complete with plastic genitals – and made to "play possum" while their laughing friends drop basketballs on their stomachs, dump a live frog in their suit, submit them to electric shocks or stick them on nausea-inducing carnival rides. Less harmful but more gut-busting – *literally* – has guys eating sushi laced with hot mustard and drinking a glass of Tabasco sauce. Others merely try to pull the underwear off of each other first, in a memory I'm still trying to shake.

In *Pokerface*, contestants have to guess which one of five men – whose bodies are hidden behind a curtain – is not relaxed. It's quite easy to tell, because one guy is having his bare bottom whipped by an S&M expert before being violated with an anal vibrator. It is the most humiliating thing I've ever seen, and yet a stroke of sheer programming genius!

Almost as outlandish is a program in which one man's butt is robotically thrusted onto and rubbed vigorously against another man's face after too many wrong answers are given. "Your ass looks moist," the host remarks at the start of one round, much to the receiver's dismay.

One highlight of the *Japanarama!* trilogy has always been to see which Hollywood stars will shed their pretensions against spokesperson advertising for some serious yen. This time, Jodie Foster sells makeup, while Arnold Schwarzenegger shills for Direct TV *and* Super Hop's Beer (playing multiple roles, rather disturbingly, in the former). You'll also see Steven Seagal, Charlie Sheen, Winona Ryder, Bruce Willis, Antonio Banderas, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt, Meg Ryan (in a wedding dress!), Kevin


FREEZE FRAME
'JAPANARAMA! VOLUME THREE'
Your ass looks moist
A wrong question moves this crotch closer to the contestant...
...who really doesn't like what he sees, in the game show Pokerface.
大喜利大合戦!!
Five wrong answers and the crotch is moved directly into the contestant's face, and then rubbed and smeared.
Call it Who Wants an Ass in Their Face?

Costner, an oblivious Bruce Lee, Britney Spears, KISS and The Addams Family.

Celebrity-less, but no less notable, are spots for Haagen-Dazs green tea ice cream, an all-Japanese production of *Evita*, and adult diapers. Others sell panties, prunes and a litany of products I couldn't identify.

If all that wasn't enough, you'll also receive a dramatic farting contest between two youths, hidden videos of people walking onto glue traps and human bowling. There is no valid reason why this shouldn't be sitting on your shelf, so get your virtual ass over to *http://too-far-east.tripod.com/japanarama/* today.

Curse of the Fly
(1965)
N/A
★★★★☆

The third of Fox's *The Fly* series, *Curse of the Fly* is not officially available on video. And that's a shame, because it's damn cool. It's miles away in tone and subject matter from the beloved original and its low-rent sequel, but effective in its sober, British quality. Imagine the style of an *Avengers* episode done scientific and straight-faced, and you have this compelling, cool, underrated little sci-fi film.

As the film begins, we're treated – literally – to slow-motion shots of a comely brunette escaping from a loony bin wearing only her bra and panties. Masterful! On the run, she comes across one of those dapper young men of the Delambre family whose ancestors pioneered experimentation in human teleportation – a project he himself is heavily involved in perfecting.

I say "perfecting," because all the kinks of disintegration and reintegration of the human body's molecules aren't all worked out. And the family has a mess of caged mutants out back to prove it! Including the dude's ex-wife, who – though now scaly-faced – still plays a mean piano!

It all leads up to a mutant revolt and a perverse, genuinely disturbing twist I won't reveal. I found *Curse* to be an incredibly unique take on the *Fly* concept; they found a new way to expand on the mythology without just doing a simple rehash. It would have been interesting to see where it went from here, but Fox gave it up until David Cronenberg reinvented the original in 1986.

What's the Worst That Could Happen?
(2001)
MGM/UA Home Video
★☆☆☆☆

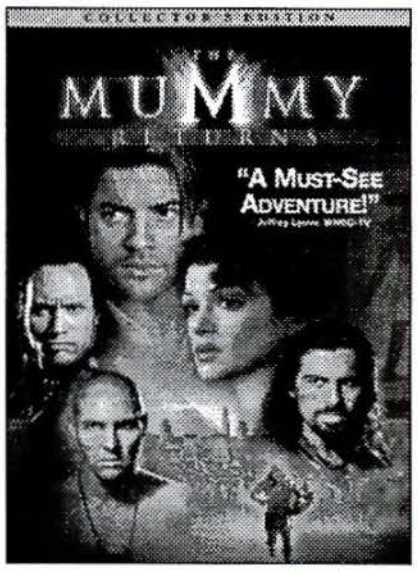
The film that answers its own question.

The Mummy Returns
(2001)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★☆☆

The original (as it were) *Mummy* was a welcome surprise in 1999, with its mindless mix of goofy humor and cliffhanger adventure. It worked so well that writer/director Stephen Sommers apparently was content with just remaking the remake. Though they'd like you to believe this was bigger and better, it's just more the same. That said, it's still fun.

PIcking up several years later, Brendan Fraser and Rachel Weisz's bickering archaeologists are now married and the parents of a precocious little boy who has inherited their sense of adventure. It should be no secret that soon, as suggested by the title, the mummy returns, once again to attempt immortality. Cue the CGI beetles.

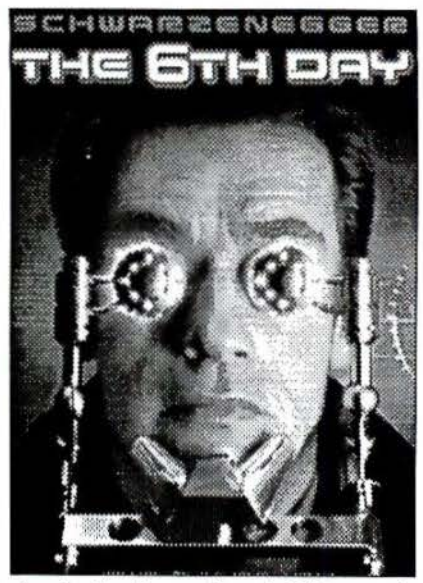
Unusually, the entire surviving cast is back, with the added addition of WWF wrestler The Rock in a brief bit as The Scorpion King. It makes little sense, and really only serves as a setup for next summer's spin-off film.



Overlong at two-and-a-half hours, this *Mummy* really comes to life in the action sequences, particularly those involving a *Crouching Tiger*-esque *womano-y-womano* sword battle, a bus being chased by demon statues and a jungle inhabited by vine-swingin' gremlins.

The 6th Day
(2000)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★★☆☆☆

In Arnold Schwarzenegger's latest failed comeback, he plays a normal family man with a serious speech impediment who discovers



that he has been cloned. This, needless to say, causes all sorts of problems for him and his family, although his clone probably enjoys sexing up the wife.

So he embarks on a search for an explanation, which leads to the usual Arnie escapades of shooting guns and flying in helicopters and running a lot and growling like a big brown bear. He even gets to smoke a cigar, leading to me to believe he probably has it written into his contracts by now.

If there's ever an Arnold movie too big for its britches, it's this one – uninvolving after an intriguing setup, way too long and all studio gloss. But the scenes in which Arnold #1 and Arnold #2 converse with each other are priceless bits of camp comedy.

Vertical Limit
(2000)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★★★☆☆

Chris O'Donnell's career choices and acting abilities have been in question ever since ... well, 1995. The snowy mountain actioner *Vertical Limit* doesn't necessarily change all that, but at least he doesn't suck as much as co-star Bill Paxton, whose monosyllabic Texan routine has now worn thinner than his hair.

Chris stars as a *National Geographic* photographer – no, *really!* – who must put away his fear of heights when his champion-climbing sister (Robin Tunney) falls into an icy crevice with greasy, rich (redundant) scumbag villain Paxton (also redundant). You really won't believe the pair as brother-and-sister, because they totally play it like they're firmly in week two of a couple's "we've just begun fucking" phase.

Also on the rescue team is the requisite spooky, local Native American hermit, played by a wackily miscast Scott Glenn. They have the bright idea to strap nitroglycerin to their backs for the trek up the peak. Making up for such nonsense is *GoldenEye* girl Isabella Scorpio as the blonde hottie. I'm pretty sure I've misspelled her name, but when you take a look at this frostbitten fox, vowels and consonants will be the furthest from your mind.

As directed by Martin Campbell, who last gave us *The Mask of Zorro*, the limited *Limit* does boast a couple of good, tense action sequences. However, like many other studio-spitshined blockbusters, it gets excessive and doesn't know when to quit.

Big Trouble in Little China
(1986)
20th Century Fox Home Entertainment
★★★★☆

If this wild film were released today, Kurt Russell's career would be resurrected, because it would earn a sizeable wad. Clearly, this is one movie that was way ahead of its time. All the mystical kung-fu gobbledygook that critics thought John Carpenter was out of his mind for putting in is now vogue.

Kurt stars as the semi-mulletted truck driver Jack Burton, a smarmy, would-be action hero with a quasi-John Wayne accent who reluctantly helps his wiry Asian friend rescue the man's fiancée, a green-eyed girl who's been kidnapped by a seven-foot, 2,000-year-old man. Further aided by easy-on-the-eyes but light-on-the-acting Kim Cattrall – in a rare clothed appearance – the guys descend into the subterranean, supernatural world that exists beneath Chinatown – a world complete with bamboo-hatted mutes that ride lightning, sewer monsters and a bad guy who blows up like a puffer fish.

Yeah, none of it makes much sense, but who cares? It's candy and cheese, Carpenter-style, and never short on action.

Superman
(1978)
Warner Home Video
★★★★★
Superman II
(1981)
Warner Home Video
★★★★★
Superman III
(1983)
Warner Home Video
★★★★☆

It's an epic! It's a classic! It's *Superman*!

Hard to believe that Richard Donner's *Superman* movie is nearly a quarter of a century old. That in turn makes me feel old. I remember seeing it sans parents in the theater at the ripe young age of eight, when I was smack-dab in my terrified-of-being-kidnapped phase, thus making me unable to fully enjoy it. I also recall the next-door neighbor boys making the trek down to the local U-Totem to buy packs of the official trading cards, which made me insanely jealous, because we weren't allowed to go. Then again, with my fear of being nabbed by strangers, that was probably a good thing.

But without a doubt, *Superman* has always been a good thing, and today, it's a great thing today. Still fresh, funny and exciting, *Superman* is not only a giant in the superhero genre (along with *X-Men* and Tim Burton's pair of *Batmans*), but also an undisputed American milestone on its own.

With two distinct tonal changes that would kill lesser films, *Superman* traces the escape of baby Kal-El from the doomed planet of Krypton, to his idyllic life in Smalltown as Clark Kent, to his eventual rebirth as the Man of Steel in the heart of Metropolis. Christopher Reeve portrays Superman in both his public and private identities, and quite clearly, he's perfect for the part. Not only that, but it's only now that we're able to see how much of a performance it actually is, rather than just a role he inhabits. (Can you imagine James Caan, Robert Redford and the Salkinds' dentist as the comic-book hero? It could have been reality, according to the DVD's excellent documentary. The screen test with the dentist will make you praise God that smarter heads prevailed.)

Superman II – directed in part by Donner before being unsummarily excused and replaced by the inferior Richard Lester – was filmed at the same time, and really is like an immediate extension of the first film. With the origin out of the way, you get more of an action-oriented plot, with Superman having to not only continue battling his nemesis Lex Luthor (a terrific and hilarious Gene Hackman), but also saving the world from the considerable threat of three fellow Kryptonians, led by a villainous-as-ever Terence Stamp. It comes mere inches from the greatness of the original.

Lots of people knock the belated follow-up, Lester's *Superman III*, but it's really a natural chapter in the mythology and spirit established in the first two films. I suppose much of the disdain has to do with comic Richard Pryor's role as computer genius Gus – recruited by corporate criminal Robert Vaughn to help defeat Supes – but he's no more goofy than previous characters in the series, notably Ned Beatty's all-slapstick sidekick.

III actually sports one of the series' more clever storylines, that of a mind-poisoned Superman growing tired of being the savior and favoring the sinner. To see him unshaven, horny and downing drinks in a bar is pretty intriguing. It culminates in a literal battle with himself, as Superman's two halves fight one another to the death.

Viewed back to back, the three films form a fairly linear, cohesive story, with each chapter making a nice and logical fit. *Now Superman IV: The Quest for Peace – there* are two dozen wrong turns in one. But let's not ruminate.

FREEZE FRAME
'SUPERMAN'

Clark Kent may look dorky, but he sure knows where the ladies like to be touched.

Stark Fear
(1963)
Something Weird Video
★★☆☆☆

I got a kick out of recognizing locations from this obscure, no-budget suspense number, filmed right here in and around Oklahoma City. But that's about all the kick I got from it.

Written and directed by two professors from my journalism school, *Stark Fear* (love that title!) centers on the lovely Beverly Garland, a prim housewife married to one of the meanest men on the planet. He wants a divorce, but she wants to work things out. When he disappears and his employer tells her he will lose his job if he's not found, Bev goes searching for the louse, sticking her nose in places people would rather she not stick it.

Her amateur detective work results in getting raped by a burly hick in a graveyard at night, while her hubby watches (and smokes!) from his own mother's grave!

Other than that action-wise, someone gets flattened by a semi,

pretty much offscreen. True to its pedestrian form, it contains the biggest non-climax I've seen in years. The box promises "some pretty good cheesecake and lingerie action," but I sure as hell didn't see any. And with Bev, believe me, I was looking.

Jack and the Beanstalk
(1952)
Madacy Entertainment
★★★★☆

Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein
(1948)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★★

Jack and the Beanstalk is not the best Abbott and Costello movie ever made, but even when it's not funny, it's pretty entertaining. When the film begins in black-and-white, Bud and Lou are acting as professional babysitters, and Lou reads a bedtime story – *Jack and the Beanstalk*, of course – to a wise-beyond-his-years kid. Borrowing a page from *The Wizard of Oz*, the film then switches to color as Lou imagines himself as the star of the story, which is complete with a talking harp; a cow wearing makeup; a sweaty, hirsute giant; and a couple of lame musical numbers.

It's no secret I'm not a real fan of slapstick comedy, but even I had to admire several of the bits. The funniest occurs early on in the framing story, when Lou mistakenly thinks an infant is throwing his voice. "It's a baby ventriloquist!" he screams in amazement. I don't know why Lou always got second billing, since Bud is the straight man who rarely says or does anything funny. This is the only movie I've ever seen where the opening credits include the small disclaimer, "This is a Fable."

Many regard *A&C Meet Frankenstein* as the duo's shining moment, and it extremely enjoyable. (Interestingly, as is revealed in the DVD's documentary, the duo didn't think much of the completed film, despite being a huge hit.) Again, it may not be funny all of the time, but when you have three of Universal's classic monsters running around, who cares?

Bud and Lou work as baggage handlers at a railroad station, where they accidentally lose two pieces of precious cargo – namely, Dracula (Bela Lugosi) and Frankenstein's monster (Glenn Strange). With the aid of Larry Talbot (Lon Chaney Jr.), who has the unfortunate habit of turning into the Wolf Man, they follow the creatures to an island castle, where a comely physician has plans to swap the monster's brain for the dim-witted Lou's.

A&C Meet Frankenstein boasts more than a few good set pieces, all based upon Lou more or less being scared. Just when you think the monster madness is over, Vincent Price "shows up" for a cameo as The Invisible Man.

A Bucket of Blood
(1959)
Madacy Entertainment
★★★☆☆

Roger Corman's loose companion piece to *The Little Shop of Horrors* (they even share the same music) is, like that later film, a low-budget black comedy about a nerd who murders – albeit accidentally at first – in order to be respected by his peers.

Dick Miller plays Walter Paisley, a busboy in a hipster coffee shop with regular poetry readings and art exhibits. Walter so desperately wants to be accepted by this snobby crowd, and gets his chance when he accidentally kills his cat and covers it in clay to pass it off as a sculpture. His peers practically pee on themselves over his "brilliance."

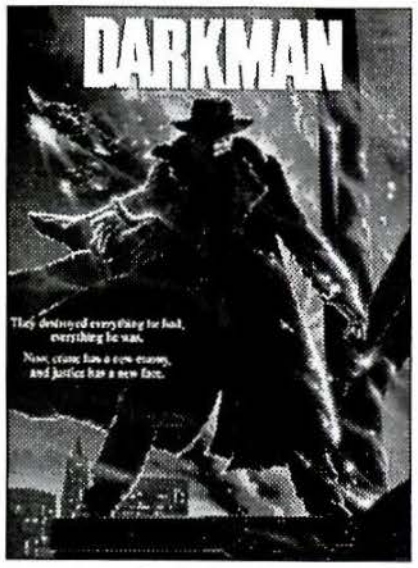
He gets a chance to follow-up the cat piece with a human when he's attacked by Bert Convy (!), but pretty soon, people start to notice the disappearing bodies. The sick premise doesn't translate into sick humor as well as *Little Shop*, but Miller makes for a more appealing nerd-lead than Jonathan Haze ever did. The film was remade in the '90s for Showtime's *Roger Corman Presents* series, with Anthony Michael Hall.

Bucket is part of a double-feature DVD with *The Giant Gila Monster*, which is painful to watch minus the *MST3K* treatment. It's part of Madacy's new, 10-title "Killer Creatures Double Features" line, each with two B-movies, a couple of trailers and an intermission cartoon.

Darkman
(1990)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★★

In preparation for next summer's *Spider-Man*, I decided to revisit Sam Raimi's *first* superhero movie, *Darkman*. Although it's clearly not the most polished of Raimi's works, I found it plays even better today than it did upon its release.

A very lanky and pale-looking Liam Neeson portrays scientist Peyton Westlake, who's working on creating synthetic skin, but can't get it to last beyond 99 minutes. When his girlfriend (Frances McDormand, in an early role) stumbles onto a secret memo at work she shouldn't have, corporate goons destroy Westlake's lab (and presumably Westlake himself) to get it back. Although he cuts off and collects fingers of his enemies, the lead villain does not cast that



imposing of a shadow because he is, after all, the retard from *L.A. Law*.

But Westlake survives the fiery explosion, though his face looks like an overcooked pork rind. To get revenge on his would-be killers, he whips up some synthetic-skin masks and poses as them, which makes for some interesting and clever situations. Unfortunately, his disguises only last so long before they start to smoke and sizzle like a

side of bacon. So the rest of the time, he runs around in bandages and a dark overcoat and hat.

If it sounds like a modern-day *Phantom of the Opera*, you're right, with a dash of *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* thrown in for good measure. Even though Darkman was a wholly original character, it's one of the better comic-book movies ever made – pulpy yet smart, rarely losing sight of what it is, what it wants to be and what it cannot be.

It was enough of a surprise hit to yield two belated and direct-to-video sequels, both of which are pretty good, though Neeson, McDormand and Raimi are nowhere to be found.

Horror Hotel
(1960)
Diamond Entertainment

★★★☆☆

When is *not* a good idea for a comely college co-ed to take a road trip by herself to do research for her term paper?

When her subject is witchcraft;

When her all-too-eager professor who gives detailed directions to the town is played by Christopher Lee; and

When the hotel where he suggests – if not demands – she stay is run by a hundreds-year-old witch.

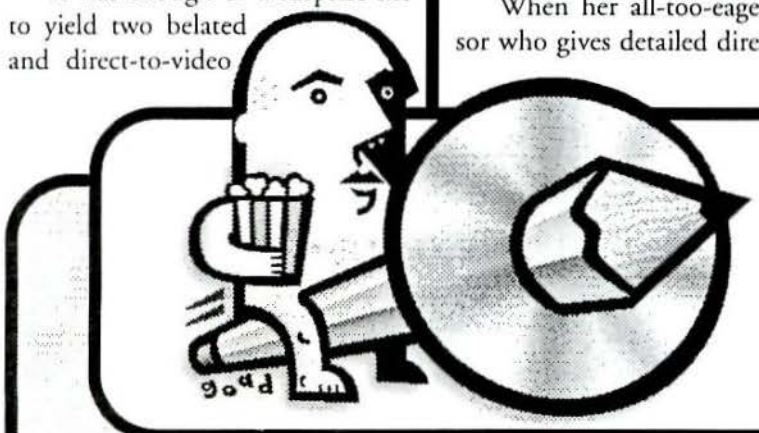
In a twist similar to the same year's *Psycho*, the girl gets killed – in an elaborate satanic sacrifice – halfway through, leaving her femme brother and knucklehead boyfriend to come looking for her, only to discover the mysteries of the coven. And all this could have been avoided if the girl would have simply kept that ominous trapdoor in her hotel room floor shut! I don't believe any college girl is this dedicated to academics, anyway – at least not any girl that wears that kind of lingerie.

Unfortunately, *Horror Hotel* doesn't have anything approaching the shocks or the scares of *Psycho*, though it does do a credible job of establishing a spooky atmosphere upfront. It might be more effective had it not revealed the plot's "secrets" in the prologue.

Pay It Forward
(2000)
Warner Home Video

★☆☆☆☆

Forget the re-release of *The*



DVDemented!
By Richard York

Matt Goad

Stanley Kubrick Collection (2001)

In 1999, Warner Bros. learned what was hopefully a very brutal lesson in the DVD industry from their god-awful release of the Stanley Kubrick collection. No restoration, no extras, no nothing.

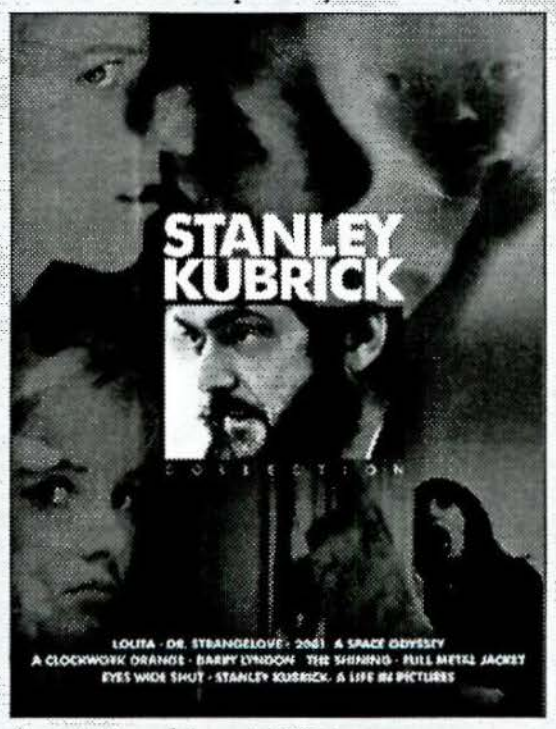
Granted, it was a prime time to inflict such an atrocity on the American public as most of the country was still learning about DVDs. After all, what did the average Joe know about anamorphic transfers or 5.1 surround sound?

Well, I'm sure there are plenty who still don't know and will probably never care. But those of us who look to DVD for the ultimate presentation of a particular film gave WB an earful. Hence the new and improved *Stanley Kubrick Collection*. The great works of Kubrick are now presented with "Holy crap!"-inducing crystal-clear picture and awesome sound.

I don't exactly have $200 for the entire collection, but thankfully they're also sold separately, as I was able to pick up a couple of my favorites, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Shining*.

I've been watching *The Shining* on TV and on VHS for years; it's the only way I've ever been able to. But to see it so crispy and with a rejuvenated soundtrack, it was like I'd never really seen it before. It's the miracle of DVD; to present a film in such a way that reopens one's eyes to the film itself.

The Shining also carries over the main extra from WB's first go-round, *The Making of The Shining*, an endlessly interesting, behind-the-scenes featurette shot by Kubrick's daughter, Christine. The doc shows Kubrick at work; the struggles of getting his vision on film, provoking Shelly Duvall to get the performance out of her that he wants. This time around, the documentary has been cleaned up – in both picture and sound – and includes an interesting if somewhat meandering commentary by the directress. It's a nice but fairly unnecessary addition, most likely to make up for WB's lack of respect they exhibited the


STANLEY
KUBRICK
COLLECTION
LOLITA · DR. STRANGELOVE · 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY
A CLOCKWORK ORANGE · BARRY LYNDON · THE SHINING · FULL METAL JACKET
EYES WIDE SHUT · STANLEY KUBRICK: A LIFE IN PICTURES

first try out of the gate.

I've enjoyed my letterboxed tape of *2001: A Space Odyssey* for a few years now, but to see it with an anamorphic transfer, the wonderful imagery of Kubrick's masterpiece really pops off the screen. That, combined with an amped-up soundtrack that bring up the haunting breaths inside Dave's space helmet and the excellent, legendary use of classical music, the *2001* disc is worth every penny of its $19.99 retail price tag, despite its lack of extras.

It was also nice to finally see *A Clockwork Orange* letterboxed for the first time. I'd often complained to myself that the film begged to be letterboxed and cursed to nobody in particular that it might never come to be. Well, here it is, in all its wide-angled glory for the first time. No extras, though. 'Tis a shame, but a shame I can live with.

Kubrick has always been a tough nut to crack when it comes to how he likes his films presented. He apparently preferred some of his films to be presented full-screen, which is why some of his films (like *The Shining* or *Eyes Wide Shut*) were never letterboxed. I don't claim to have any understanding of this, but WB seems to think that this is the way Kubrick wanted it. He's dead, so who are we to argue?

But despite WB's attempts to assuage collectors, resorting to the "Kubrick wanted it this way" defense doesn't always work. If this new collection is supposed to be the real deal – the Kubrick collection to end all Kubrick collections – why couldn't they finally release an uncensored *Eyes Wide Shut*? Are we to believe that the uncensored version available in the rest of the world is going against Kubrick's wishes? We know that Kubrick relented in a small way to a contractual obligation to deliver an R-rated film to the U.S. box-office. But wouldn't he have preferred an untampered version to be available for the home? Don't even get me started on censorship in the U.S.

Exorcist; this was the year's scariest movie. There's just no way to accurately describe the sheer horror of the sappy, melodramatic, manipulative *Pay It Forward*.

Against his better judgment, Kevin Spacey plays a grade-school teacher with severe burns that challenges his class to come up with an idea to change the world. The mop-headed and walnut-eyed Haley Joel Osment does, and invents a system where instead of paying someone back for a favor, you "pay it forward" by doing good deeds for three others. Helen Hunt is Osment's alcoholic shrew of a mother, who just needs Someone to Love. "Hmm," thinks Osment, and sets about to hook up two people who would never hook up outside of a stupid Hollywood drama.

I wish you could take back Oscars when actors do something this terrible, because Spacey deserves to have one docked; Hunt not only deserves to lose hers, but be banned from winning one ever again. In many ways, this is the definitive Helen Hunt movie, because it allows the world to see just how much she truly does suck as an actress. And perhaps as a human being. Not that you should see it at all.

Hunt doesn't just act awful – she looks awful. If you plopped a trailer-trash wig on one of the sword-wielding skeletons from *Jason and the Argonauts*, you'd have a dead ringer for Helen Hunt. Not that Osment fares much better – you want to give him a good kick to the head, give him a haircut and then give him a good kick to the head. Hey, Haley, you were good in *The Sixth Sense* and all, but there's a reason they didn't give you the Academy Award for it: Because you're not *that* good. So stop trying to play everything like you're Laurence Olivier with undescended testicles. The saint act is something I'm not buying, which is probably why I laughed at *Forward*'s ludicrous ending, which has little Haley knifed to death by a fellow student on school grounds.

Though watching it amounted to two hours of torture, I had hoped one of two things would happen that would have totally redeemed the movie:

At some point, I prayed that director Mimi Leder would introduce a supporting character from her previous film, *Deep Impact* – namely, the killer comet.

There's a Tender Love Scene in which Hunt is undressing Spacey before they do it. She opens his shirt to discover his hideously scarred bacon chest. I hoped that while she was touching it, his chest would have opened up like that guy on *The Thing* and chomped off her

But for collectors, the new Warner Brothers Kubrick Collection is the one to get, as everything seems to be the best (and most definitive) it can be. Plus, there's a substantial documentary (*Stanley Kubrick: A Life in Pictures*) included in the set that's frustratingly not sold separately. I could really use a copy of that DVD. Hint, hint.

Ring

Horror films, as you know, are so watered down nowadays that the genre barely seems to exist anymore. It's been deconstructed so many times that the deconstruction has replaced the deconstructed. No more good ideas, really – just ruminations on old ideas. So it's especially nice to be reminded what horror films were once capable of.

Ring is just such a film, a Japanese blockbuster whose premise is brilliant in its simplicity and understated in its execution. A mysterious videotape is being passed around. Those who watch it receive a phone call immediately after. Then, one week later, the viewer dies. What begins as an urban legend, soon proves to be horrifyingly real. A reporter investigates the legend and soon finds herself next in line for death. Her goal is to get to the bottom of the legend before her week is up. In the end, she does and she doesn't.

Ring succeeds particularly in the presentation of the cursed video. Filled with grainy, non-sequitur imagery, the images slowly begin to make sense as the story behind the legend unfolds. With excellent use of music, sound and the universal appeal of watching something "forbidden" (think *Videodrome*), the video lives up to its horrifying legend. When you think about all that they could have done with that video, you realize how brilliant their approach truly is.

I hesitate to even mention that there's a surprise ending because that notion alone makes the brain overcrank as you try to predict the outcome. Such a thing ultimately ruined *The Sixth Sense* for me. But the ending of *Ring* is an addendum, after the film appears to be over, that proceeds to wrap things up in a shocking and brilliant way. The reveal is well-executed and haunting; it will stay with you long after viewing.

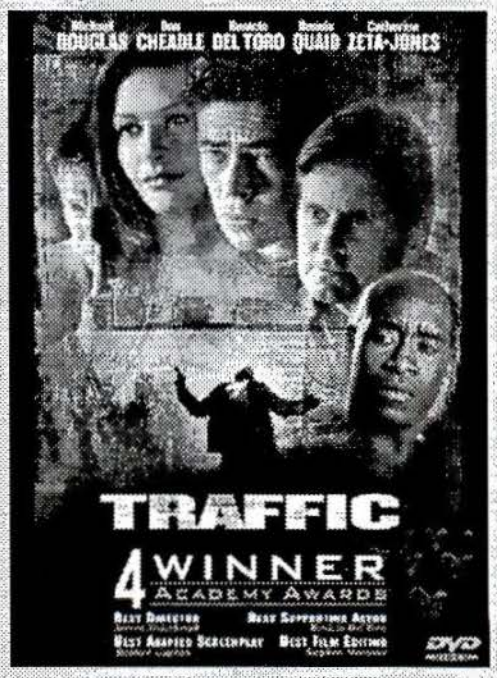
The DVD has yet to receive a domestic release in the U.S., despite rumors of DreamWorks already planning a stateside remake. Currently, it is only available overseas in non-U.S. region DVDs. Making good use of my multi-region player, I ordered the UK disc. The picture on the disc is pretty dark and far from restored, but the overall picture is pretty clear. The English subtitles (not available on the Japanese DVD) are white and are sometimes unreadable, but you'll find that you can catch most of it. The extras include the actual cursed video; a UK *Ring*, *Ring 2* and *Audition* trailer; and a UK review.

If you don't have a multi-region player, I highly recommend you purchase a gray-market video from one of the many online sources like Video Search of Miami (*www.vsom.com*) or one of your choice. The only reason I would encourage getting it through unofficial sources is that it should be viewed before DreamWorks unleashes their Americanized (i.e. homogenized) version. *Ring* is easily the most frightening horror film of the last 20 years.

Traffic

Steven Soderbergh is probably the best actors' director out there, judging by his two films from last year, *Erin Brockovich* and *Traffic*. In *Erin*, he made Albert Finney shine and chipped a few chunks off of Julia Roberts' cutesiness. In *Traffic*, *everyone* shines, from Michael Douglas (whose career is slowly taking the right turns), Benicio Del Toro and Catherine Zeta-Jones-Douglas. The list of great performances is as long as *Traffic*'s cast, so it's fitting that Soderbergh snatched away the Best Director Oscar from Ridley Scott.

Traffic is so good that I couldn't sit still. I wanted to savor it, like a fine meal. The story, ultimately, is about the absurdity and futility of the drug war, told in three separate stories that eventually converge.



In one, Douglas is an important figure in the war on drugs, while his own daughter gets high on crack. Del Toro is a Mexican cop enduring the dubiousness that is Mexican law enforcement. And Zeta-Jones is a clueless wife of one of the biggest drug smugglers in California.

This disc itself is a bit of a letdown. There aren't many extras. Most conspicuously absent is a commentary by Soderbergh. He's been so good about providing commentaries to his films lately (*The Limey*, *Out of Sight* and *Erin Brockovich* all have great commentaries), but has for some reason foregone that blessing here.

Is this one of those times where the disc comes out in a pared-down version, tricking people into buying now? And then, a couple of months later, a *Traffic* Special Edition is released that might eventually include a Soderbergh commentary? Sometimes the DVD industry really pisses me off. H

Say It Again, Ham
'The Fast and the Furious'

Michelle Rodriguez: "I smell skanks! Why don't you pack up before I leave treadmarks on your face?"

Street Racer: "Find another way to go home, Pizza Boy!"
Pizza Delivery Guy: "Goddamned street racers!"

Paul Walker: "I like the tuna here."
Vin Diesel: "No one likes the tuna here!"
Paul Walker: "Oh, yeah? Well, I do."

Paul Walker's boss: "He's got nitrous oxide in his blood and a gas tank for a brain!"

Vin Diesel: "I live my life a quarter-mile at a time."

arm.

Regretfully, neither occurred. Even though this movie did me no favors, I'll pay it forward anyway by imploring you to stay as far away from this one as humanly possible.

The Fast and the Furious
(2001)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★☆☆

This in-name-only remake of the AIP drive-in hot-roddin' hit begs comparison with last summer's *Gone in 60 Seconds*. Like that movie, it's not good, but enjoyable watching as a bad film. However, it's bad on an entirely different level than *60*, making it probably the one worth watching even if it is inferior. Got it?

The ever-scowling Paul Walker – whose curly blonde hair reminds me of the New Year's baby from that Rankin-Bass cartoon – is a cop going undercover as a gearhead to bust a semi-trick robbery ring perpetrated by precision drivers in cool helmets and with tricked-out cars equipped with nitrous-oxide tanks. His assignment leads him to being taken under the wing of the ape-like Vin Diesel, the best street racer around. Walker warms up to Vin and his sister, played by Demi Moore lookalike Jordana Brewster, who has distracting, split-level eyebrows. Michelle Rodriguez appears briefly as Vin's girlfriend, destroying any dignity she had coming off *Girlfight*.

When it was all said and done, I felt like I'd been beaten over the head with a hammer, Rob Cohen's direction is such a sense-assaulter. Terrible rap-metal music plays loud all the time and there are more rapid-fire cuts than GEDs in its target audience.

Kiss of the Dragon
(2001)
20th Century Fox Home Entertainment
★★★★☆

Jet Li follows up the success of *Romeo Must Die* with this Franco-American actioner set in gay Paree, written and produced by Luc Besson, whose last few movies haven't been worth seeing, much less mentioning.

In it, Jet — looking vaguely like Paul Reubens — is a Beijing cop sent to France to help the local authorities nab a Chinese bad guy. (The reasons are cloudy, but no matter.) They set up surveillance in a swank hotel, watching the guy gets his kicks with a coked-up hooker. But when things go wrong, it's the French cop that turns out to be the bad guy after all, killing the man and the ho, and setting up our pint-sized ass-kicker for the crimes.

But the inspector – who screams a lot and keeps a turtle in his desk – picked the wrong Chinaman to push around. Jet, as you would expect, is quite skilled in the martial arts (at one point even taking on an entire karate class at once!). He is also adept at subduing his opponents with acupuncture needles that he keeps a supply of on his wrist. These work well. So well that I wonder why he bothered getting hit and kicked when he could have just planted his special magic pins on their various nerves and pressure points.

Foremostly, Jet also is in possession of a videotape that shows the inspector to be the true villain. At one point, the inspector gets this valuable tape back, only to have it stolen again because he just leaves it unlocked in his desk drawer. (*Note to bad guys:* Incriminating evidence is best left locked up, if not outright destroyed.)

The inspector also serves as a sugar daddy of sorts to ex-junkie and current street whore Bridget Fonda, who complains that she's lucky to have five clients in a week. Okay, she may look a little disheveled, but I don't believe for a second that a hooker looking like Bridget Fonda would be wont for work. She'd be snapped up faster than the last chocolate long john at John Goodman's family reunion. She is forced to join up with Johnny to bring down the French cop.

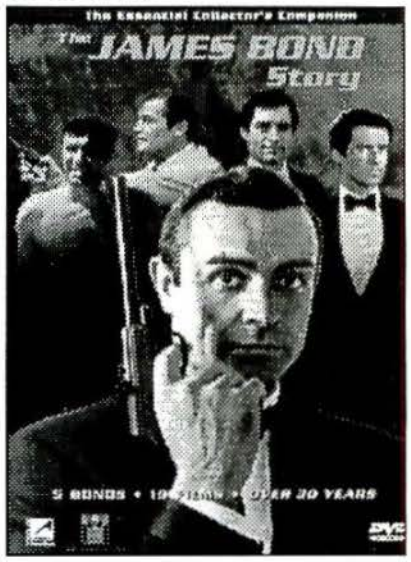
As if the whole needle angle wasn't enough of a gimmick, you also get a *Scanners*-esque meltdown with blood squirting out of every hole in a guy's head, a goon getting cut in half in a laundry chute and a cute rabbit making a snack of a dead bunny. Despite all the insanity, *Kiss of the Dragon* is well worth seeing because of the sheer visceral pleasure of the fight scenes. The film has an annoying habit, however, of pumping some loud rap song whenever dudes start to tussle. As if the sloppy direction and too-quick editing weren't distracting enough, this is one trend I'd like to see nixed.

When it's all said and done, *Kiss of the Dragon* is no *Black Mask*, but it's a fine, fun hark back to the simple pleasures of kung-fu yesteryear.

The James Bond Story
(1999)
Fox Lorber Home Video
★★☆☆☆

I'm to the point where I believe if you've seen one James Bond documentary, you've seen them all. Seriously, what more is there to be said? This under-an-hour one is your standard clip job, covering the girls, the gadgets and all the usual suspects.

Roger Moore, Pierce Brosnan, Maud Adams and Jane Seymour are interviewed especially for this program; comments from Sean Connery and Cubby Broccoli come via previously released footage. It's kind of boring and stodgy, really, and it doesn't help that it's heavily weighted to focus on *The World Is Not Enough*, one of the worst Bond movies ever.



The Island of Dr. Moreau
(1977)
MGM/UA Home Video
★★☆☆☆

H.G. Wells' classic novel has been filmed three times, and this is the middle one ... and the dullest. You'd think an AIP production would best be able to bring out the tale's B-movie best, but it's slow, near lifeless and overly brown-and-yellow.

Michael York washes up on the titular isle, where Dr. Moreau (Burt Lancaster) conducts his wacky genetic experiments that turn merge man with animal. All the creatures, from Richard Basehart on down, look like rejects from *The Wolf Man*.

This flick is need of something more, like a massive fat guy and his midget sidekick, which is exactly what New Line's legendary box-office bomb of an adaptation gives.

The Naked Prey
(1966)
Paramount Home Video
★★★★☆

Here's the ultimate chase film – nearly 98 minutes of pure, primal manhunt! Cornel Wilde (*The Greatest Show on Earth*) stars and directs this South African-set tale about greedy white guys on safari who find themselves captured by a native tribe when they offend them.

In a truly harrowing sequence, the tribesmen take great pleasure in torturing Wilde's co-workers – spit-roasting one, allowing a cobra to bite another – but a stripped Wilde himself is able to make an escape. The spear-throwing tribe gives immediate chase.

Wilde runs and runs across the land in a trek-for-life that makes *The Fugitive* look like child's play. He encounters the dangers of the wild, all the while trying to stay ahead of his pursuers. Though there is very little dialogue in the movie (English dialogue, anyway), *Prey* is totally engrossing and suspenseful, and never boring. In other words, it could never get made today.

Scary Movie 2
(2001)
Dimension Home Video
★★★☆☆

While the first film is not one headed for the National Film Registry, its then-ripe parodying of the teen-slasher genre made it a hip hit. Such a hit, in fact, that Miramax has rushed this sequel into theaters one year to the date of the original's premiere. As a result, it's not up to the level of its gross-out papa; with a little more prep time, they could have easily topped it, as *SM1* was merely hit-and-miss, committing to neither side.

SM2, as it stands, is hit-and-miss as well, but unfortunately, its hits appear to be front-loaded, as opposed to spread throughout the film. Thus, even with a running time that barely hits 80 minutes, it grows tedious.

Four characters return: the sweet yet naive Cindy (Anna Faris), pothead Shorty (Marlon Wayans), not-so-closeted football player Ray (Shawn Wayans) and his "girlfriend" (Regina Hall, mysteriously and inexplicably resurrected from her death in the first one). Now in college, they take part in an "experiment in fear," which holes them up in a haunted mansion for the weekend, thus allowing for a broad structure that's equal parts *Scream 2*, *The Haunting* and *House on Haunted Hill*. Also along for the night are slutty sexpot Kathleen Robertson and talking horse Tori Spelling.

Years earlier, the house was the site of a possession, allowing for an *Exorcist* spoof prologue, with James Woods demolishing his Serious Actor credibility as a priest with defecation difficulty. Today, it seems to be haunted by the ghost of Bull from *Night Court*, a skimpy plot point existing only to allow for a stream of unrelated sequences parodying *Poltergeist*; *A Nightmare on Elm Street*; *Charlie's Angels*; *Mission: Impossible 2*; *Hannibal*; *Survivor*; *The Weakest Link*; *What Lies Beneath*; *Hollow Man*; *Dude, Where's My Car?*; and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

So what's funny? Mostly *Mr. Show*'s David Cross and Chris Elliott, who steal the movie as a handicapped assistant and the house's caretaker with a gimp hand, respectively. They're so good, they operate on an entirely different level of class. Faris also shows some considerable comedic flair.

So what's *not* funny? Probably what made the first one such a word-of-mouth hit: All the dick and pot jokes. Seeing Spelling giving head to an invisible man is more repulsive than hysterical, and after a short while, it seems like the Wayans subscribe to the "when in doubt, do a blowjob gag" style of comedy, which isn't exactly creative or groundbreaking. Marlon Wayans' constantly high character is again not at all funny, because Wayans himself is not at all funny. (Repeat: *Marlon Wayans is NOT AT ALL FUNNY.*) As anyone who has seen *Requiem for a Dream* can attest, he should be doing drama.

Ultimately, though you will laugh, you may feel a bit cheated by *Scary Movie 2*, because its shortened schedule shows, in both script and screen. And given the box office, expect the same brief window between now and the inevitable *Scary Movie 3*.

House
(1986)
Anchor Bay Entertainment
★★★★★

House II: The Second Story
(1987)
Anchor Bay Entertainment
★☆☆☆☆

I saw *House* when it opened, at the Westpark Mall two-screen cinema, just before it closed up forever. Then in junior high, I went with my friend Dwight, and at one point, he was so scared, he literally jumped from his seat and screamed *"Oh, shit!"* For that, *House* has always been a fond memory.

It's odd now to think anyone under the age of 10 would find *House* truly scary, because it's really a comedy with a haunted-house setting. But it's damned entertaining.

William Katt from *The Greatest American Hero* stars as Roger Cobb, a Stephen King-like writer with a lost son and a 'Nam complex. In order to clear his writer's block, he moves into his recently deceased aunt's spacious but spooky home. Hence the title.

Once he's settled, he understands why his aunt hung herself: The damn thing is crawling with monsters and creatures! Plus, he's attacked by a stuffed swordfish and sharp garden tools have acquired the gift of flight. But once starts to wonder if it's all in Roger's head when he mistakes his estranged wife (the mighty hot Kay Lenz) for a fat witch with floppy titties and shoots her dead. Nosy neighbor George Wendt thinks Roger's going loco until he sees his new friend get sucked into a closet.

There are many surprising touches in *House*, most all of them played for laughs – even the rotting skeleton soldier. For a low-budget movie, the effects are pretty impressive. It's certainly the best work Katt has ever done, and among the tops of director Steve Miner's filmography (which includes such lows as *Friday the 13th 3-D*).

Up until recently, I had only seen *House II: The Second Story* once before. I think that was more than enough. Even though they have the same screenwriter, the two movies share none of the fun or cleverness. All they have in common is that they take place in a house and co-star a supporting character from *Cheers*. This is one of the rare cases where I wish the sequel was *exactly* like the first one, because then it would be good; what's here is something that looks like it was made for the aforementioned 10-year-olds.

The entirely unappealing Ayre Gross stars as Jesse, an orphan who moves into the home that has been in his family for generations. Rummaging through old photos, he decides to dig up his great-great-grandfather and see if his coffin contains a lost, valuable bejeweled skull. It does, and guess what? The old coot himself is still alive! "I'm a 170-year-old fart," says wrinkled Royal Dano.

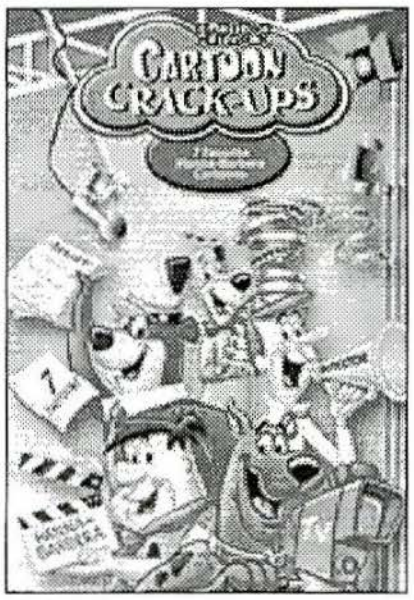
Gross carries on and has wacky adventures with an annoying pal played by an annoying actor whose

SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET
AMY YASBECK

Before winning roles in *The Mask*, *Problem Child* and John Ritter's heart, red-headed Amy Yasbeck got to shame herself onscreen in *House II: The Second Story*, as a Madonna-esque singer who specializes in the kind of crappy music that dated this film four days after its premiere. Prancing around in pink underwear and a skimpy T-shirt that "shows off" her fifth-grader breasts, Yasbeck sang lines about being touched and moving up into hyperspace. With a performance like that, she's lucky she ended up married to Ritter and not Norman Fell.

name I don't even care to look up, a cheap-looking prehistoric bird puppet and a dog that looks like a worm (as opposed to a dog *with* worms). Nothing much happens, other than John Ratzenberger showing up as an electrician and discovering an alternate universe within the wall, and yet it still lasts an hour and a half.

At least it's better than *House IV*, but what isn't? Oh, yes, *Pay It Forward*.



Cartoon Crack-Ups
(2001)
Warner Home Video
★★★★☆

Seven classic, beloved Hanna-Barbera cartoon series are spotlighted on this specially priced Cartoon Network-branded DVD that, no surprise, might be enjoyed more by elders like me than the kiddos … although they'll go apeshit for it, too.

No matter how old I may be, I doubt I'll ever lose my appreciation for the simple, color TV cartoon. The older they are, the better they are, and *Cartoon Crack-Ups* captures the H-B studio in its heyday, from superstars *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons* to the lesser-known *Huckleberry Hound* and *Top Cat*.

If I haven't already seen it 100 times thanks to my son, I'm sure I would have been more thrilled with *Scooby-Doo's* "Jeepers, It's the Creeper" episode. But I was more excited to see things I hadn't before, like *Pixie & Dixie* (in a dead-cat-themed short that is truly laugh-out-loud funny) and a *Yogi Bear* cartoon showing roots of absurdity that today flower on such fare as *Space Ghost Coast to Coast*.

A real bonus is *The Flagstones*, a roughly animated, few-minutes pilot for *The Flintstones*. Other extra features on the disc include brief biographies, a jukebox of theme songs and some animation storyboards. It would have been nice to see some trailers and documentary-type features, which I know are out there, but for the price, you get double your money's worth already, because *Cartoon Crack-Ups* is cartoon crack.

Tarantula
(1955)
MCA/Universal Home Video
★★★★☆

The Black Scorpion
(1957)
Warner Home Video
★★☆☆☆

At the height of Cold War paranoia, there were lots of giant-bug movies. Here are two – one utterly beloved, the other less so.

Tarantula, directed by *Creature from the Black Lagoon's* Jack Arnold, does everything right, by beginning with the collapse and death of a hairy man with a deformed face in the Arizona desert. As authorities discover, he was the fellow scientist of bushy eyebrowed Leo G. Carroll, who is experimenting with a growth serum on lab rats, guinea pigs and – yep, you guessed it – tarantulas. When Carroll is attacked in his lab by another freak mutant, one of the spiders escapes, free to roam the countryside, grow 100 feet tall and eat livestock.

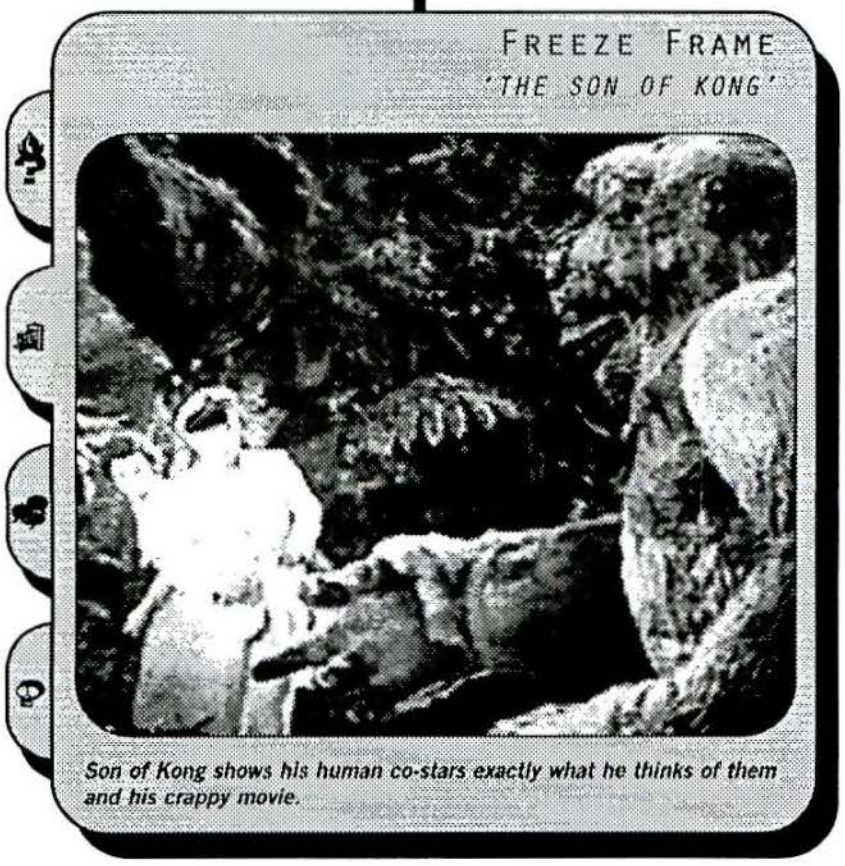
As a doctor and a scientist's assistant, John Agar and Maya Corday take it upon themselves to

rid the state of this oversized arachnid, although in the end, thanks really deserve to fall to Clint Eastwood and his squadron of fighter jets, who bomb the critter to a burnt crisp. Things aren't all rosy for Carroll, either, whose face mutates into something resembling an Easter Island statue with Down's Syndrome, thanks to a dose of his own serum.

Brisk at 80 minutes, *Tarantula* delivers cheap thrills made all the more juicy by pretty convincing special effects, even if they are just matted-in footage of a real tarantula walking very, very, *verrry* slowly.

By contrast, the creatures in *The Black Scorpion* move far quicker, but faster doesn't mean better. Not to be confused with Roger Corman's *Black Scorpion* (although it could benefit from that film's ample Joan Severance cleavage), this cheapie plops Richard Denning and Maya Corday (*again?*) in an earthquake-and-volcano-ravaged Mexico, where enormous scorpions (yes, we mean plural) run around on a bloodthirsty rampage.

The scorpion footage – which you have to wait for an eternity for – is actually pretty cool and creepy, thanks to great stop-motion animation by pioneer Willis O'Brien (*King Kong*), although in close-ups they just look like Teletubbies. But the rest of it is so dull and pedestrian. It comes to life during an extended crane dip into the scorpions' underground lair, where a precocious boy is chased by a giant spider, and when the arachnids derail a train and duke it out, but the exposition is bound to put you to sleep.



Son of Kong shows his human co-stars exactly what he thinks of them and his crappy movie.

The Son of Kong
(1933)
Turner Home Entertainment
★★☆☆☆

No sane person can dispute the awesomeness of 1933's *King Kong* – just as no sane person can hold its sequel up anywhere near that level.

This brief, lame, poorly acted follow-up seems incredibly rushed, which may explain the sheer amount of padding in the front half. The flimsy story has Benham (Robert Armstrong), now penniless due to that whole Empire State Building fiasco, being suckered in to a return expedition to Kong Island. Along the way, he picks up a banjo-strummin' carnival hussy, who is a poor substitute for Fay Wray.

As soon as they set foot on the island, the crew comes across some ooga-booga natives, a giant bear, a couple of dinosaurs and ultimately a hungry sea serpent. Oh, and Son of Kong, whose white fur makes him look like the first cousin of the Abominable Snowman in that *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* cartoon. He's well-animated but needlessly comical.

This Kong is friendly from the get-go, posing no threat to the humans, but the stereotypical Chinese cook (in fact, that's the character's name – Chinese cook!) carries a kitchen machete just in case. Lil' Kong protects the gang and shows them some treasure before drowning in a flood. Ain't life a bitch?

Contaminated Man
(2000)
Promark Entertainment Group
★☆☆☆☆

Poor William Hurt. How does one go from being nominated for

an Oscar three years in a row to toplining a below-average virus thriller from the director of *Waxwork*?

With a mullet that makes him look like a Foghat roadie, Hurt stars as a hazardous materials specialist for the UN. He's called to a chemicals company in Budapest (economically enough), where a veteran employee (an unrecognizable Peter Weller, bald and looking like he's pushing 70) has just been downsized and taken revenge by unleashing some, like, really bad chemical stuff.

Unfortunately for Weller, he's also gotten himself exposed to the stuff and becomes ... wait for it ... the Contaminated Man! Basically, this means he coughs a lot and everyone he touches grows pus-filled blisters and spews skim milk within the hour. All the viewer gets is an uninvolving, sub-*Outbreak*-type chase where The Accidental Tourist tracks RoboCop from one public place to another. It all culminates in Weller filling a remote-control submarine with his infected blood and threatening to taint the water supply.

Director Anthony Hickox has done fun work before in pure B-movie mode (*Prince Valiant*), but this is not another notch in that belt. No, this is drab, bleak viewing, made all the more drab and bleak by being set in Budapest, of all the places in the world he could have filmed. The only thing great about *Contaminated Man* is its title.

The Valley of the Gwangi
(1969)
Warner Home Video
★★★☆☆

Jason and the Argonauts
(1963)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★★★★☆

Movies involving cowboys and Indians were never for me, but cowboys and dinosaurs, as in *Valley of the Gwangi*? I think I could get used to this.

Before venturing *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, the clenched-teeth James Franciscus goes to Mexico to see his former flame, who now spends her time in a rodeo, riding horses that jump from a ramp into big tubs of water. It's kind of a turn-on.

Jimmy hopes to make her rich when he discovers a miniature horse – and we do mean *miniature*. He's barely bigger than a bug, and they have to chase and lasso him as he scampers across the desert.

But that's not the only strange creature they find. Nope, there are pterodactyls and the titular Gwangi, a mid-sized dinosaur that they capture and put in the circus, which he doesn't like, as is evident when he fights an elephant.

The second half is a lot more exciting than the first, which starts off pretty slow. But the only thing that is consistent are – as always – Ray Harryhausen's excellent stop-motion effects.

They're even better in the classic *Jason and the Argonauts*, also produced by Charles Schneer. I could never get through Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*, but I feel like I'm getting it all here.

Jason (Todd Armstrong) rounds up a team of men in skirts to help him find the fated golden fleece. Only it ain't gonna be easy! Along their treacherous journey, they encounter a giant stone warrior, some flying bat-creatures, a seven-headed dragon and an army of skeletons. You know, no matter how polished special effects are today, *nothing* can beat those fucking fighting skeletons for sheer coolness.

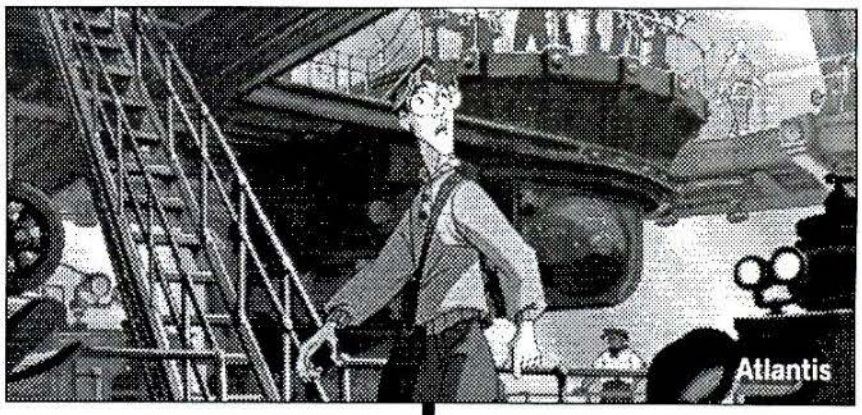
The colorful *Jason* is overly talky-talky at the beginning, but once the fantasy elements kick in, it's like you're a kid at a Saturday-morning matinee.

Stripped to Kill
(1987)
MGM/UA Home Video
★★☆☆☆

Who is killing the skanky strippers of a miserably dank strip club? Middle-aged hottie cop Kay Lenz goes undercover to investigate. She even begins to like stripping (and hey, Kay, we like it, too!).

Despite that intriguing premise, *Stripped to Kill* is one of those movies where you utter, "I already hate this" before the opening credits have concluded. Shot in Roger Corman's usual flat and murky Concorde "style," *StK* stinks, even with all the copious nudity – some of it even Kay's!

When Kay first performs, it's both demeaning and laughable. She's egged on by earringed partner Greg Evigan (*B.J. and the Bear*), who emotes just like Joey Lawrence.



In a career-downslide role, Mr. Roper himself, Norman Fell, is the cigar-chewing club owner who demands his dancers stay topless for 30 seconds. Directress Katt Shea Rubin does her best to slow everything to a crawl and make everyone but Kay repellent. (Even Corman should know you don't grant creative control on films to someone named Katt.) At least it's true-to-life; the strippers' dressing room is marked "SLUTS."

So tune in only for Kay's two brief strip acts. And perhaps the line "I think Killer peed on my bra."

Atlantis: The Lost Empire
(2001)
Walt Disney Home Video
★★★★☆

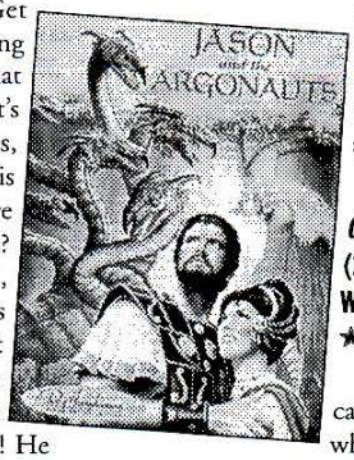
Finally, a Disney movie that's all story and no songs! Maybe that's why it's *good*. Michael J. Fox voices a nerdy museum lowlife who gets the opp of a life to help man an expedition to the lost city of Atlantis. The story is strong, but the animation is stronger, at times even captivating. It's the kind of fun adventure Disney used to make and wish they would make more of.

H

HARRISON 3-YEAR-OLD MOVIE CRITIC

Jason and the Argonauts
(1963)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★★★★☆

Hey, who's that big guy? Look how big he is! He's bigger than you, Daddy. I'm not that big. See? Hey, are they going to fight him? They're going the wrong way! Why are they running away from that big guy? Hey, it's a bat! He flies! Oh, he's going to stick him! Hey, there's two of them! Zikes! Get them! Get those flying bats! Hey, what's that monster? Oh, it's another big guy! Yes, it's a fish man! What is he doing? Why are we watching all of this? Hey, it's a dragon! 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6! How is he going to kill that dragon? That dragon is going to hurt that mama. Oh, he did it! He killed that dragon! Now what? Skeletons? There's one! There's one! Are there a lot? *Another* one? How many are there going to be? Hey, I thought they were going to fight those guys! Those guys are going the wrong way! Oh, now they're fighting them! Zikes! Ha ha! His head fell off! That's all. Who's Jason?



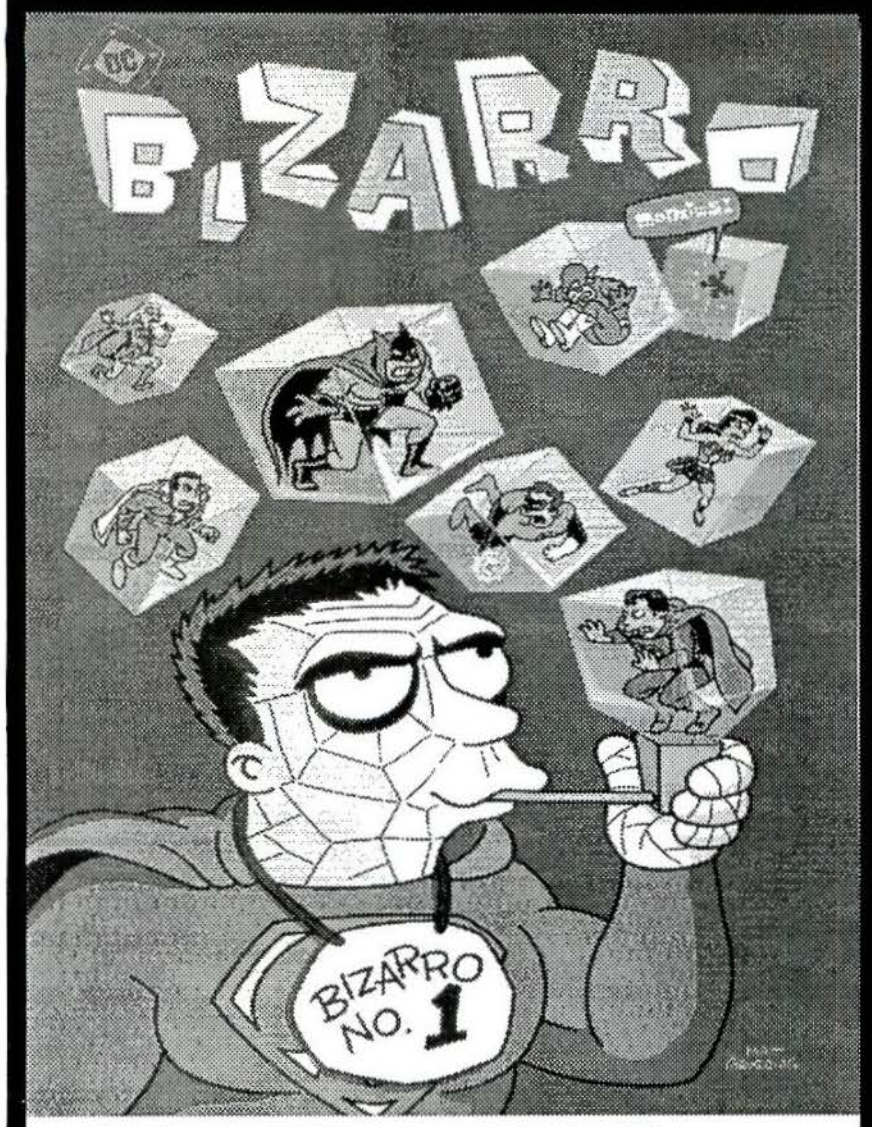
Vertical Limit
(2000)
Columbia/Tristar Home Video
★☆☆☆☆

That snow movie last night was terrible! When they fell down and went into that cave and coughed. That was spooky!

Cats & Dogs
(2001)
Warner Home Video
★★★★★

I liked when that cat kicked the dog. And when the cat kicked the dog. And when the cat kicked the dog. I don't know what else. I think I want a cat.

H

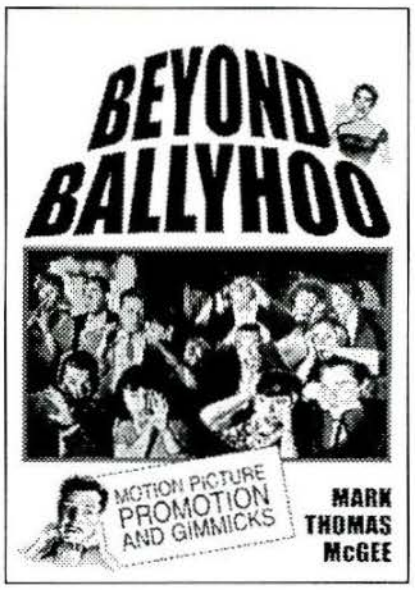


missed opportunity

Bizarro Comics!
(DC Comics)

The theory behind *Bizarro Comics!* is great: Gather some of the alternative comics scene's most innovative young talents and set them loose on the DC comics universe. (Gee ... it sounds suspiciously similar to the excellent Marvel Benefit issue of Coober Skeeber that Tom Devlin published a few years ago.) When I heard about the line-up of this comic, I couldn't wait to get my hands on it. The roster includes Paul Pope, James Kochalka, Jessica Abel, Kyle Baker, Dylan Horrocks and many others. However, despite the talents involved, this book kind of sucks. The first problem is that it's a $30 hardcover. The second problem is that most of the creators involved are known for both writing and illustrating their work. In *Bizarro Comics!*, they are often teamed up with someone else, with one person providing the script and the other person providing the art. Most of the resulting strips just don't flow as seamlessly as the creators' solo work. There's also a very lame framing sequence which is just stupid and takes up way too much space. There are some great strips here, the highlights of which are Kyle Baker's *Letitia Lerner, Superman's Babysitter* (which DC was too chicken-shit to publish a few years ago), both of Paul Pope's contributions, a great Supergirl strip by Dylan Horrocks and Jessica Abel, and a few others. The book is beautifully produced and most all of the art is outstanding. But the package as a whole just feels like a corporate cash-in. Hopefully all of the artists involved were well-paid and will use the money to further their own work.

books



Beyond Ballyhoo: Motion Picture Promotion and Gimmicks
By Mark Thomas McGee
(McFarland Classics)
www.mcfarlandpub.com

First published in 1989, *Beyond Ballyhoo* now has been reissued in paperback, which is all to our enormous benefit. McGee's lively book goes in-depth about the lengths to which movie studios used to go to promote their wares. In the early years, films hawked new processes like sound and Cinemascope to lure people away from their TVs. But things got really innovative with master showman William Castle – on whom a whole chapter is deservedly based – whose vibrating-seat and flying-ghost gimmicks for *The Tingler* and *House on Haunted Hill* had audiences screaming ... and turning out in droves. As McGee notes, Castle's unique approach led to a litany of giveaways and tricks, from fake insurance policies against death by fright to the ill-fated Smell-O-Vision. And then came perhaps the biggest gimmick of them all: 3-D! Though the three-dimensional effect worked to the advantage of *House of Wax* and *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, McGee argues that it was thrown on so many cheap stinkers (*Robot Monster*, anyone?) that it dug its own grave. His writing is breezy and easy, making for an enjoyable, fast read. The text is accompanied by dozens of great stills and wonderful ad mats for several of the B-movies mentioned. In the end, *Beyond Ballyhoo* really makes you regret not having been alive to witness this style of motion-picture hucksterism, because it all looks and sounds so exciting. In these days of Taco Bell tie-ins and EPKs, the idea of "ghost viewers" and "magic witch deflectors" sounds so much more appealing. *–RL*

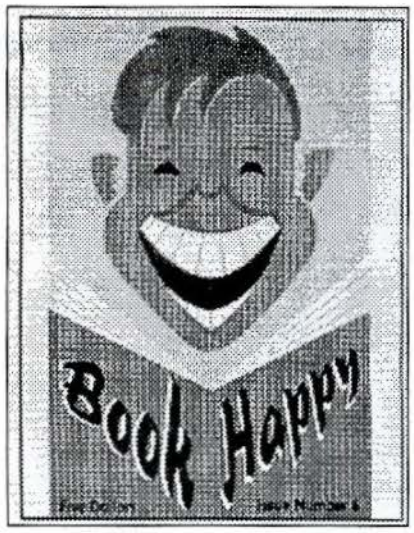
zines

***Book Happy* #6**
P.O. Box 86663
Portland, OR 97286
www.book-happy.com
$5

It's fitting that the address for this wonderfully unpolished zine con-

READING KICKS ASS!

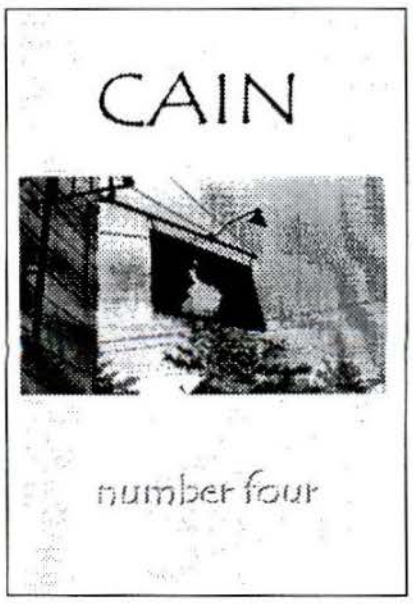
Long-time HITCH readers will remember when we reviewed all kinds of printed material. That ended when Rod got tired of getting crappy zines to review. Now that the "zine movement" has died off and those losers have gone on to making crappy websites, we have decided that it's once again safe to review stuff to read. And as with the other sections, we will review everything we receive. So if you've got something you'd like to get reviewed in HITCH, send it to HITCH Print, P.O. Box 21141, Oklahoma City, OK 73156. (This is only the address for Print.)



tains "666," because *Book Happy* is a trip into biblio-hell, uncovering the best-left-uncovered tomes in the dust-ridden corners of thrift stores. Profiled in this issue are a black man's investigation of the KKK, hillbilly DIY gynecology texts (written in hick dialect!), a pair of "Is Elvis alive?" paperbacks and some bad poetry (redundant, if you ask me). The best thing about *Book Happy* is that it reads these strange books for you … so you don't have to! *–RL*

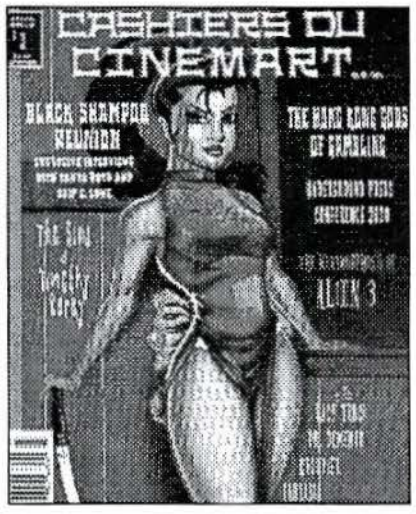
***Burnt* #3**
400 Park Rd.
Parsippany, NJ 07054-1737
$1

As far a punk zines go, this is one of the better efforts I have read. Articles include bits on AIDS in Africa, the murder of punk Brian Denke, how there is no God and scads of reviews. It's only a buck and you could do worse. *–LF*



***Cain* #4**
P.O. Box 200077
New Haven, CT 06520
$1

Intensely interesting and enthralling reading material. Don't let the bare-bones layout fool you; *Cain* is packed with stories that make this zine hard to put down. In this issue, Michelle tells us of her trip to China, where she discusses the way the Chinese treat foreigners (especially Americans) and hanging out with apathetic Chinese punks. Tired of all those pesky political beliefs? "Activism, Schmactivism" is a good primer on why they are stupid. *Cain* closes with what is perhaps one of the best articles I have ever read in a zine. In "A Place Like This," Michelle goes undercover at a homeless shelter to learn the day-in, day-out struggles of the residents, but uncovers the political games of both the administration and the vagrants. Whenever stories like this are written in zineland, they are filed with PC-BS, made-up stats and a whimpery tone of "what's this world coming to?" Michelle does none of that. Instead, she tells us what really goes on and has an actual journalistic style that most 'ziners would scoff at. I, for one, commend her. *–LF*



***Cashiers du Cinemart* #12**
P.O. Box 2401
Riverview, MI 48192
www.cashiersducinemart.com
$3

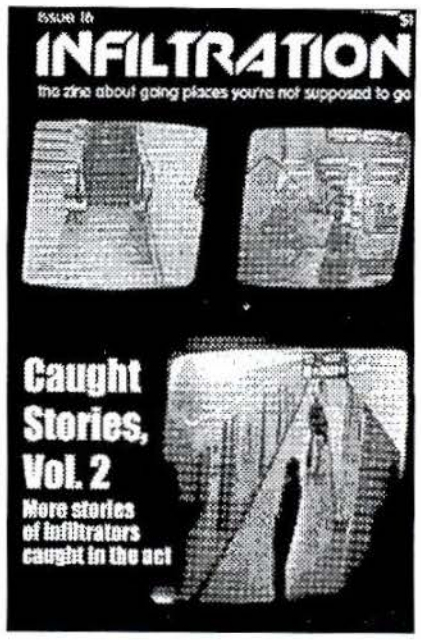
I've occasionally followed *CdC* since its early beginnings, when its anti-Tarantino articles and B-movie loves were legendary and charming. Today, it's really grown. And while it's still a good read, it's missing one component from the past that I really long for: *movie reviews!* There are a couple of reviews, to be honest – for fare ranging from *Blair Witch 2* to William Shatner vehicles – but they're written more as essays than the down-and-dirty format that works so well. There are a lot of capsulized reviews of books and CDs, so why not movies? This issue covers a couple of film festivals and, strangely, an Austin writer's workshop and the Underground Press Conference. The best piece is a thoroughly well-researched and well-written account of the development of the film *Alien 3*, detailing all the treatments and drafts (including William Gibson's) that were not to be, in an honest and opinionated style that you have to appreciate and admire. *–RL*

***Connect the Dots* #1**
13981 Reading Ferry Rd.
Princess Anne, MD 21853
$2

I have to give Miriam one thing: She is very passionate about her beliefs and views. It's just too bad they're all idiotic. She rants and rails against all religions, especially Catholicism, capitalism, marriage, eating meat, men in power, etc. You've heard it all before. She is all for a return to paganism, an idea which is laughable within itself. The issue's lone contributor, Brian Osmond, adds absolutely nothing. Miriam also claims that when you read the book *Days of War, Nights of Love*, you will be forced to rethink your positions on things such as getting a job and wearing that pesky deodorant. *Yipes!* So if you want to stink, be broke, hate Catholics and believe the earth is set atop a turtle, then *Connect the Dots* is for you. But, if you're a normal person, watch some *Benny Hill*, eat a burrito and go to sleep. *–LF*

***Disconnect-O* #1**
P.O. Box 17355
Rochester, NY 14617
$1

In this world of idiotic teenage girls weaned on the idea that *Dawson's Creek* is art, Sisqo is the end-all, be-all of R&B and Carson Daly has a purpose on this earth, it is refreshing to actually read the thought processes of a 17-year-old girl who is smart enough to know better. While definitely not professional, AP-style writing, Emily has a way with words that make you genuinely interested in her life and what's going on in it. The personal diary entries are possibly the best part and I wish there were more. And while I generally shy away from zines that emphasize the so-called "fat pride" movement, Emily's own trials and tribulations with being overweight make for a compelling read. A little too skimpy at 8 pages, but very impressive for a 17-year-old. If you're into personal zines, chances are you'll like this one. *–LF*

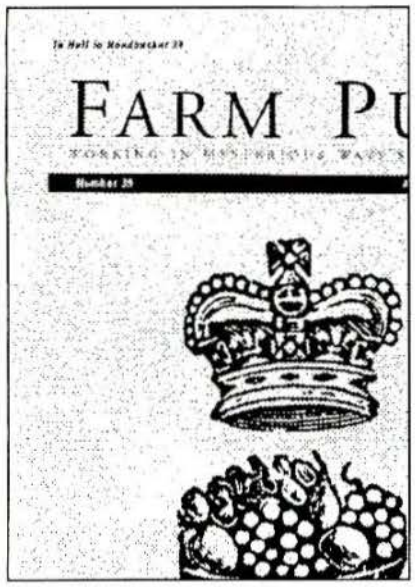

issue 16
$1
INFILTRATION
the zine about going places you're not supposed to go
Caught Stories, Vol. 2
More stories of infiltrators caught in the act

***Infiltration* #16**
152 Carlton St.
P.O. Box 92552
Toronto, Ontario, M5A 2K1, Canada
$1

Infiltration is the type of zine I would have really dug back in high school back when I was a wannabe rebellious youth. Now, I hate to say it, but I can only find it mildly interesting. I guess that's what selling out does to you. Ninj and his pals break into different places and "explore." Issue 16 covers breaking into places and getting caught by the man. The writing varies, as it is mostly letters from various infiltraitors telling their stories. Like I said, it's kind of interesting, but just not my thing. *–LF*

***Farm Pulp* #40**
P.O. Box 2151
Seattle, WA 98111-2151
$3

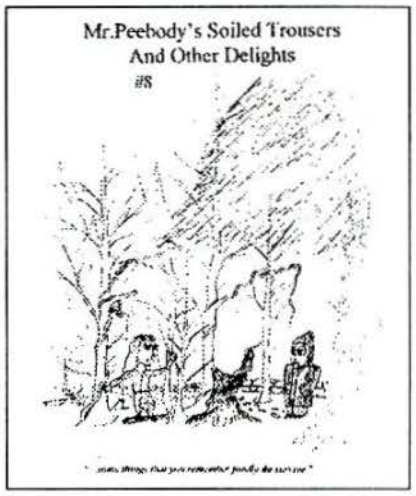
I have heard a lot about the legendary *Farm Pulp*, but had actually never seen a copy. So now I have finally read an issue, cover to cover. Does it live up to its status? In a word, no. The layout stinks, the writing tries to be poetically clever and funny (achieving neither) and the whole thing is just a real chore to get through. The one article that I thought would hold some promise, "You May Already Be a



Winner" just spiraled downward into nothing-really-funny-happened-so-I-have-to-make-stuff-up territory. Is this supposed to be art? Either way, don't waste your money. *–LF*

***Fish with Legs* #5**
224 Moraine St.
Brockton, MA 02301-3664
$1

Eric Lyden is one funny, funny guy. Need proof? Check out *Fish with Legs*. In this issue, Eric interviews himself. We learn how he went to school with not one, but *two* serial killers, how he feels about professional wrestling and politics and how lying isn't always the best policy. The piece entitled "Confessions at of an Omnivore" is extremely funny and an excellent antidote to all the pro-vegetarian pieces I have had to read in the past few days. "What an Asshole" is about how Eric thinks he's an asshole, and the "Fun Facts" were priceless. My favorite fun fact? "I can't say the name Dick van Dyke without giggling." How true. Much like a homely 10th grade girl, what it lacks in looks, style and overall self-esteem, it makes up for it in content. Do yourself a favor send Eric a buck. He deserves it. *–LF*



***Mr. Peebody's Soiled Trousers and Other Delights* #8**
P.O. Box 931333
Los Angeles, CA 90093
$2

First off: This is one of the best zine titles I have ever came across. It sounds like a demented children's book. Secondly, I thought this zine was great. I am not a big fan of personal zines, but the fact that Jason wrote in a diary format made it easy to enjoy. It's accessible, likable and you almost feel like you're sneaking a peek at someone's journal that they have hidden under their mattress. Jason talks about everything and is practically ashamed of nothing. Jason's life reminded me heavily of *High Fidelity*; both have (or had) record stores, both complain about family in incredibly minute descriptions and both dwell on and on about relationships. Overall, a highly readable zine that leaves me wanting to hear more about Jason's new adventures in L.A. *–LF*

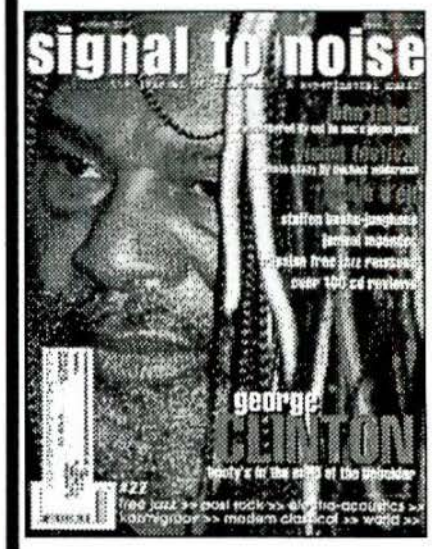
***Rat Blood Soup* #6**
6359 Lancaster Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19151-2622
$2

One of my favorite zines is back for another round of hilarious baiting and bantering. Despite a name change, *Rat Blood Soup* is still the same old *Willzine*. In this new issue, Will tells us about the hell that is a job in data entry for a major pharmaceutical company; the harrowing true tale of trying to buy a customized pair of Nikes with the words "Sweatshop" on them; and Internet pranking at the expense of people who are *way* too into the ABC show *Once and Again*. The two best articles are toward the back, though: In "Barber Tales #4," we learn about what scum of the earth barbers really are with the case study of Todd, a possible drug user and a guy who's really, *really* into Chris De Burgh. Then, Will bravely steps up to defend the much-ridiculed art of cover bands. What's his defense? "John Tesh: plays originals." 'Nuff said. *Rat Blood Soup* is a cover-to-cover read. *–LF*

Rat Blood Soup
#6
...really, Daddy??
INSIDE: About Strangers; Temp Gig; Barber Tales; in Defense of Cover Bands; Once & Again; Horoscopes; Found Objects; Work Signs & lots of other stuff

***Recluse Zine* #1**
P.O. Box 09558
Columbus, OH 43209
$1 + stamp

What has promise in the introduction merely becomes a collection ultra-politically correct rants and whatnot. Editor Jill Herbst has a real affable, conversational tone to her writing that draws you in immediately, but the topics and issues she and her cohorts write about have been done to death, and what's worse is that they add absolutely nothing new to their arguments. The column entitled "For the Love of Animals" I thought at first was a joke, because the author had pets by the names of Cuddles, Speckles and, for the love of God … Snickers. Turns out the author is very serious about this cause. Jokes are made at the expense of President Bush, but end-time paranoia-styled propaganda is aimed at those that would end abortions. D.A. Johnson adds some poetry that's not too good and the mostly punk CD reviews are passable for this type of zine. The book reviews are well-written, though. I probably would have liked this more if in the intro it announced that it was a zine with a political agenda instead of pretending to be a personal zine. Overall, a good effort that will hopefully polish and find a topical format in time. Good cover and layout also. *–LF*



***Signal to Noise* #22**
416 Pine St.
Burlington, VT 05401
www.signaltonoisemagazine.org
$3.95

***Skyscraper* #9**
P.O. Box 4432
Boulder, CO 80306
www.skyscrapermagazine.com
$4.99

***Magnet* #50**
1218 Chestnut St., Suite 808
Philadelphia, PA 19107-4816
www.magnetmagazine.com
$3.50

Those who say rock journalism is dead have never picked up a copy of *Signal to Noise*, *Skyscraper* or *Magnet*. Each one in its own way professionally covers music that isn't covered anywhere else, or at least not this passionately. *StN* has more of a free-jazz bent, interviewing the legendary George Clinton and covering New York's Vision Festival, buoyed by a strong review section and simple but clean layouts. Firmly entrenched in the heart of alternative, indie rock is the book-sized *Skyscraper*, once again an enormous collection of Q&A interviews with varied acts – here, Queens of the Stone Age, Superdrag and 16 Horsepower, among other. Even if you're not a fan of the band, you'll often find yourself interested anyway. This issue is even better than the last one, thanks to some articles toward the back praising old-school kung-fu films and questioning the influence of the Sex Pistols. And as for *Magnet*, well … how much more

praise can I give this magazine? Sticking to its motto of "Real Music Alternatives," the Philly-based rag just keeps improving, now rightly celebrating 50 issues with a look back at its origins. They've struggled, and you have to commend their dedication – they deserve every stroke of success that comes their way. Illustrating the magazine's eclectic but always impeccable taste are interviews with Air and Ennio Morricone – generations apart, but married in the spirit of marvelous melodies. Should I even mention the CD reviews? It's bound to bankrupt me someday. *–RL*

***Snackbar Confidential* #38**
P.O. Box 895
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
$2.95

Willard Dribbleman finds so much unintentional comedy by scouring '70s-era newspapers and magazines for advertisements. Even though it's basically all ad after ad, damned if you won't read every word. This issue (probably not *really* the 38th) finds grocery greats like Holiday Inn grape soda, Devil Shake chocolate drink, candy apple Kool-Aid, Kotex tampons and Gorilla Milk. On the cinematic side, you'll enjoy art for *The Giant Spider Invasion*, *Frogs*, *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes*, *Don't Look in the Basement* and an ABC movie-of-the-week with James Brolin entitled *Trapped* ("Accidentally locked in a department store overnight … attack dogs on the loose!"). Willard also throws in a review of *Scream Baby Scream*, some music reviews, "Real Letters from Morons," an editorial lambasting TV Land for showing *Three's Company* and a free Carnival moist towelette! *–RL*

***Star Thirty-Eight* #1**
P.O. Box 963
Havre de Grace, MD 21078
$2

An enjoyable quasi-perzine that is basically collected vignettes from William's life. "The Snag" is the namesake of William's weird boss who gets dragged off from work by cops and no one knows what happened to him; "More Than Twice" introduces us to The Pull-up Man, an exercise enthusiast in his mid-sixties who runs through the park and challenges people to arm-wrestling contests; and the best story is "Notes of a Purple-People-Eater from Festivus Maximus," the tale of going all the way to Scotland in order not hear anybody talk about the Super Bowl. Funny stuff. Warning for all the illiterates: No pictures here, only text.

***Streetcleaner/Movie Hell* #10**
PMB 146
1515 N. Town East Blvd., Suite 138
Mesquite, TX 75150-4142
dead@airmail.net

The latest *Streetcleaner* continues the zine's no-nonsense style of movie reviewing, tackling everything from the Frank Sinatra presidential assassination thriller *Suddenly* to William Friedkin's little-seen psycho drama *Rampage* to some piece of horror-shit called *Bloody Murder*. While I wasn't interested in reading *every* review, they are well-written, often with the humorous tone that I so adore (example: "Actually, all the girls in this movie are sea donkeys."). Extra points are earned for finding some great ad mats to use for illustrations. *–RL*

***Tape Op* #22**
P.O. Box 507
Sacramento, CA 95812
$3.95

An excellent resource magazine for those that are into home recording. I personally, am not really that into it, but *Tape Op* is well-written, authoritative and a great source for information on starting an audio-related product. This is helpful obviously for musicians, but also for either zinesters who would like to put together a comp or film-makers who want to make a soundtrack. Go to *www.tapeop.com* to get a free subscription. *–LF*

comics

Twenty Four for Life
Rooster Press
P.O. Box 7100
San Diego, CA 92167

Twenty-four hour comics tend to slip quickly into the surreal and incomprehensible. This could be because the concept's originator, Scott McCloud, recommended narrative improvisation as the most satisfying approach to the exercise. Or it could be because the cartoonist becomes tired and frantic after awhile and starts losing brain control. Regardless, I've learned to read any comic done in 24 hours with a lot of trepidation. That having been said, David Hedgecock does an adequate job of holding things together in *Twenty Four for Life*. While the ending is cryptic and inconclusive, the meat of the story reads like a tense Hollywood action movie – a refreshing change of pace from the self-indulgent surrealism of most 24-hour comics I've seen. The plot concerns an Everyman who's been slipped a fatal mickey and must complete a string of shady tasks in order to get the antidote. He's warned that the poison takes (appropriately enough) 24 hours to kick in. Hedgecock begins slowly, picking up the speed as the story unfolds, and adding dangerous complications along the way. While the inks are horribly sloppy, the visual story telling is solid … a rarity not only for 24-hour comics, but for mini-comics in general. Interestingly, Hedgecock also numbers each page with (presumably) the hour at which the page was finished. This book isn't very satisfying as fiction, but as a cartooning exercise, it's an interesting look at what a decent cartoonist can do under pressure. It makes me curious to see what Hedgecock is capable of when he gives himself a reasonable amount of time. *–OG*

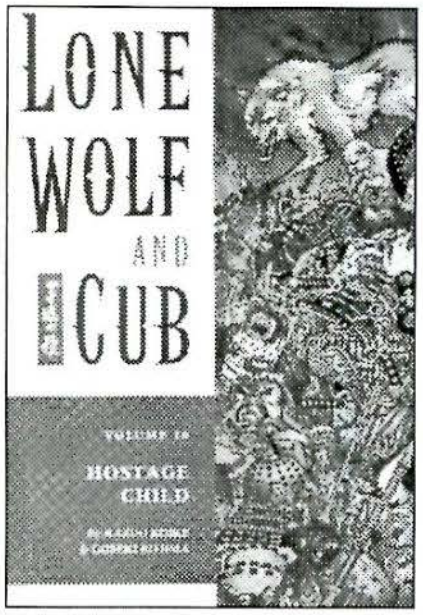
***Modern Industry: Futurista!* #1**
110 Pacific Ave. #296
San Francisco, CA 94111
$4

It's a shame I didn't get my hands on volume 2 of this two-part anthology. Editor Shawn Granton

assigned several small-press cartoonists a common theme for these issues, and it's always fun to see how skilled creators will diverge from a given point. *Futurista*'s theme is "the future." Not surprisingly, the degree of talent here varies, but the overall result is a better-than-average comic for a small press effort. Imaginations run rampant, and one finds everything from fearful speculation to goofy humor – a visual/verbal zoo of human responses to the vast unknown. Pien's 'trib is a standout, as is Catmull's, Pham's and ... well, if I were to keep going, there'd be more standouts than not (and the unlucky few would be writing me angry letters). Bottom line: This is a good effort. (Now somebody send me volume 2 to review so I can read that one as well.) *–OG*

Lone Wolf and Cub #10: Hostage Child
By Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima
Dark Horse Comics
www.darkhorse.com

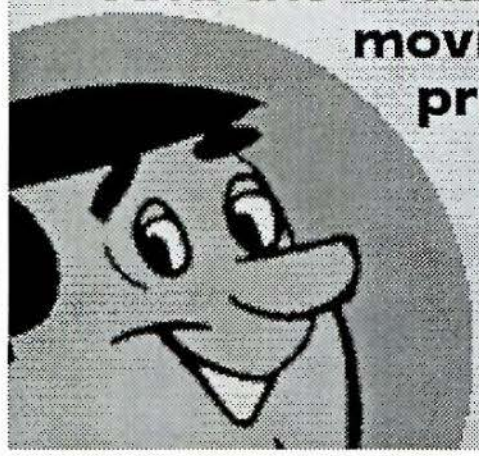
Okay, I told you guys about *Lone Wolf and Cub* a few issues ago. I told you that it was a seriously kick-ass samurai comic that no he-man should be without. I told you that it was like having a bloody and insane action movies in a little



book that you could carry around in your pocket. And what did you say? "It's all just a bunch of randomly strung-together fight sequences! It's the same thing every story, he just kicks a little more ass!" Well, motherfucker, you were *wrong*, because over the last few issues, *everything* has come together. The seemingly insignificant stories in the first few issues have proven to have importance in the grand scheme of things and *Lone Wolf and Cub* has exploded revealing itself to be a true epic. In *Vol. 10: Hostage Child*, father and son are separated and much of the book deals with little Daigoro struggling to survive. It's brutal stuff. But I guess not as brutal as the hundreds of swordsmen Ogami Itto kills at the beginning of the book. The great thing about Lone Wolf is that it is amazingly violent, yet surprisingly touching and intimate. Highly recommended. H

next issue

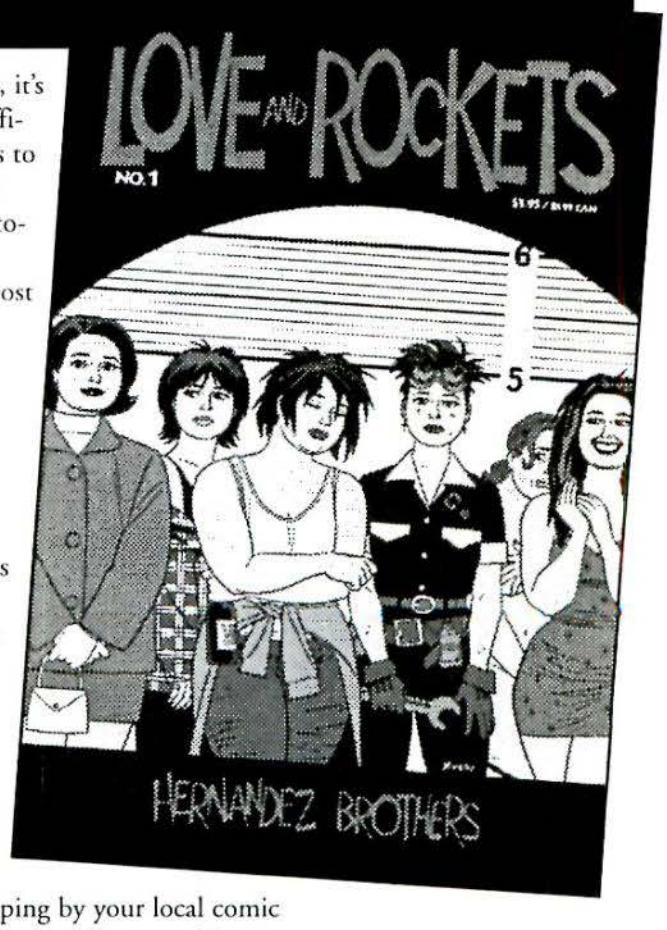
- **Stuff that is funny**
- **Stuff that is informative**
- **Stuff that is spelled correctly (mostly)**
- **And the usual slew of movie, CD and print reviews**



HITCH

#28 • Winter 2001 on sale in November

spotlight



Love and Rockets fucked me up at an early age. I guess I was 11 or 12 when I started seriously seeking the original series. Of course at the time, I was probably more interested in the naked boobies. But even then, I knew that *Love and Rockets* was something different. Something *much* better than the John Byrne comics I was also reading at the time. *Love and Rockets* had killer art and great stories – but it was all more or less about real life. And real life was something that was pretty rare in comics at the time.

Love and Rockets was the creation of Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez, two brilliantly talented young cartoonists from California. It was a black-and-white, magazine-sized anthology. In its early issues, it literally *did* feature both love and rockets, and sometimes even dinosaurs and giant space monsters. But as the series progressed, the Brothers began to narrow their focus. Jaime concentrated primarily on a group of young punk girls living in Hoppers 13 while Gilbert chronicled the life of a small town in Mexico called Palomar. The result was 50 issues of groundbreaking comic-book excellence.

The brothers decided to end the series with #50. Both felt it was time to explore other creative opportunities. They both unleashed a slew of excellent solo comics. However, after an initial burst of experimental miniseries, both brothers soon returned to their beloved cast of characters from *Love and Rockets*. And now they have decided to bring the original anthology back from the grave.

While some of the motivation in resurrecting *Love and Rockets* may have been financial, I'm glad to see that it's back. It's great to have Jaime and Gilbert back in the same mag, and so far the issues have been excellent. Even their more sporadic brother Mario has returned with a new strip. At this point, it's probably a little difficult for new readers to comprehend what's going on in these stories. After all, these characters have almost 20 years of history and backstory. Luckily, this is chronicled in 15 massive paperback collections.

Over the years, *Love and Rockets* has become a massive novel told in comic book form, full of richly developed characters and engaging plots.

And naked boobies.

You can see for yourself by stopping by your local comic book store or logging onto fantagraphics.com.

H

"*Eyeball Magazine* distinguishes itself as a bright star in the independent media scene... Broad in scope, polished in execution, well-designed, full of useful information, cautionary anecdotes, and contacts — *Eyeball* does not disappoint. Highly recommended."

Invisible City

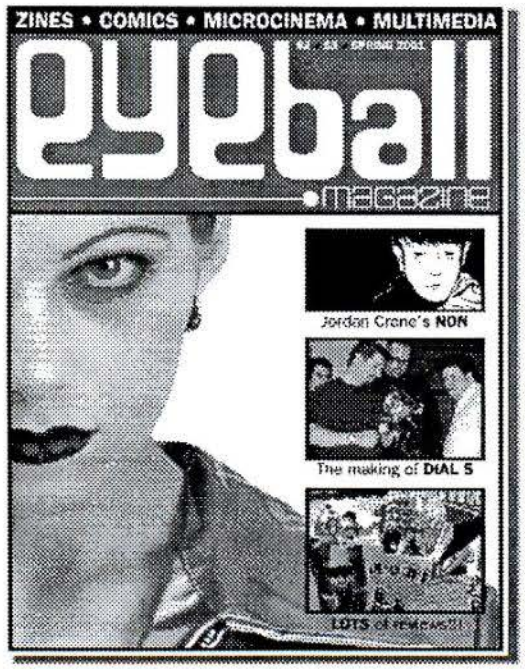
"The design is sharp and I'm definitely looking forward to future issues."

Rick Bradford

"...the real treats are the crisp, informative zine and comics reviews."

The Comics Interpreter

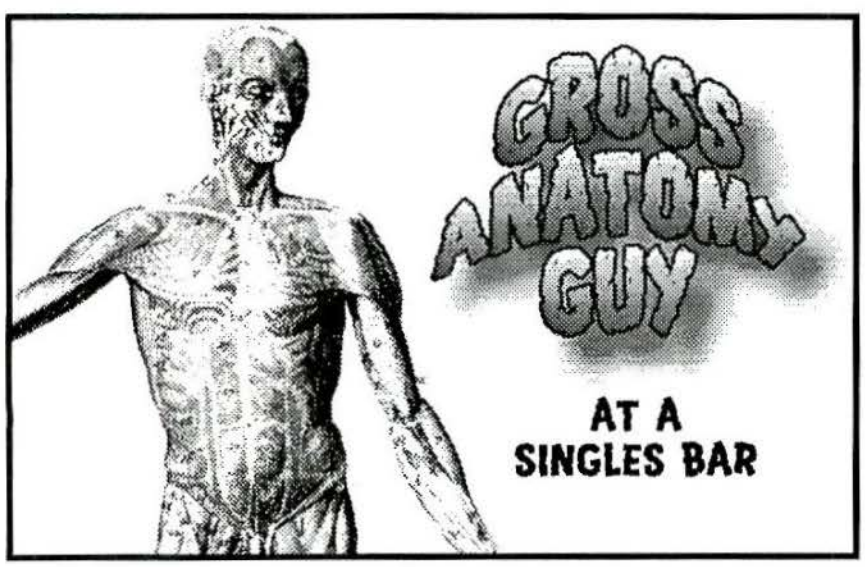
...and we're just getting warmed up.

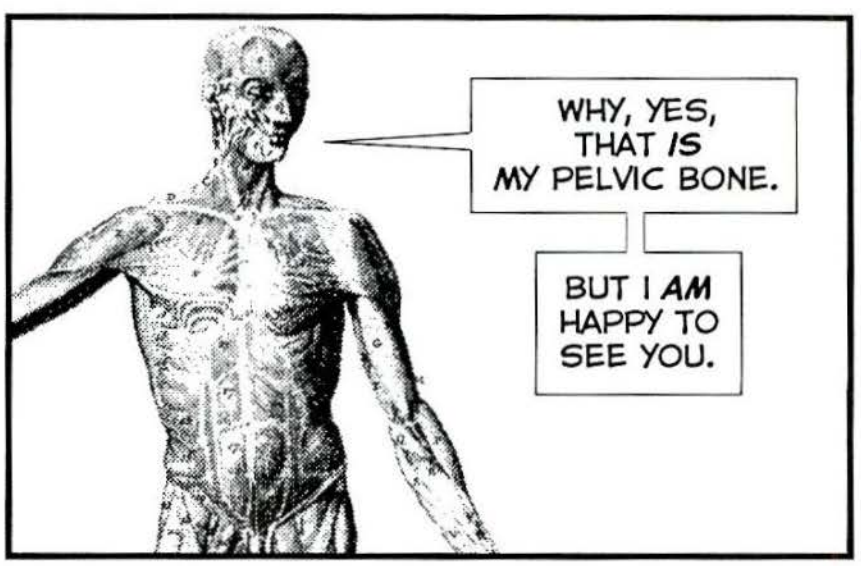


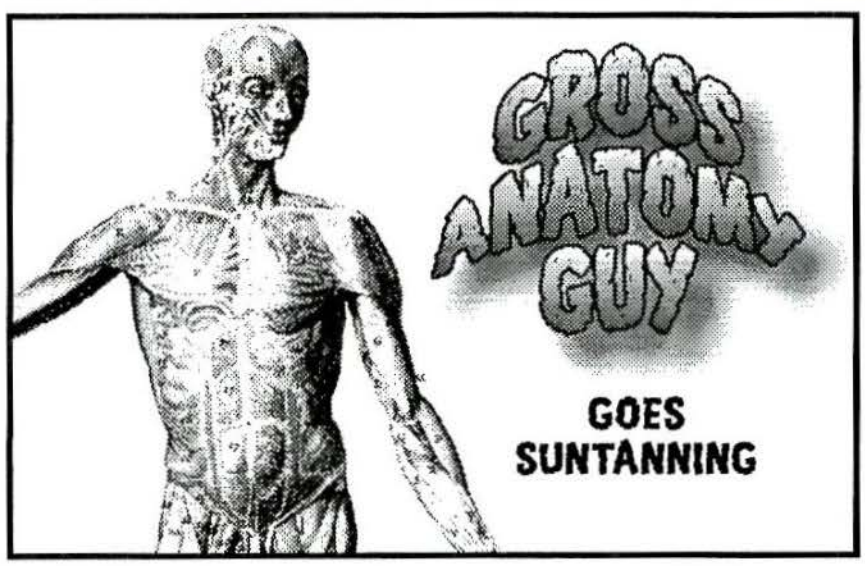
EYEBALL #2 is now available for just $3.50ppd. Send well-concealed cash, check or money order (payable to Chris Sharpe) to **EYEBALL MAGAZINE**, P.O. Box 21141 Oklahoma City, OK 73156. Or use your Visa/MC or PayPal account to buy a copy online at:

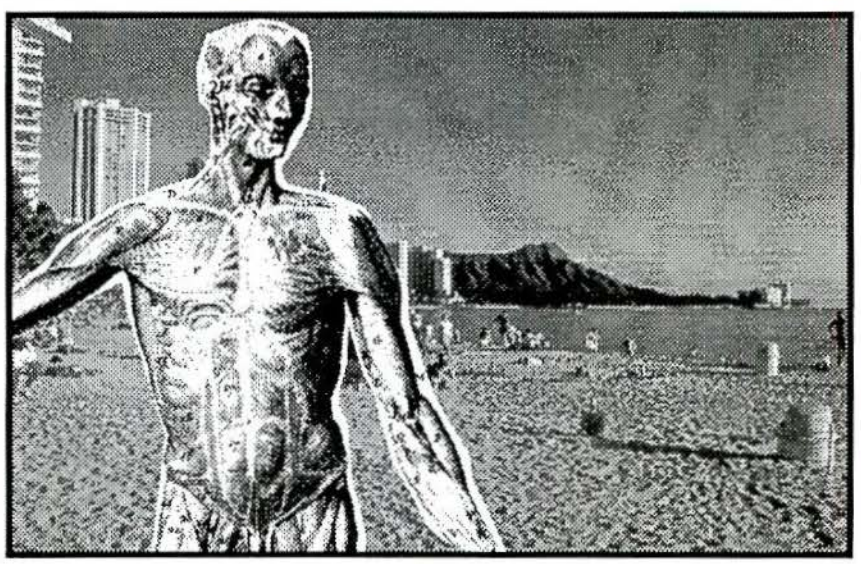
eyeballmagazine.com

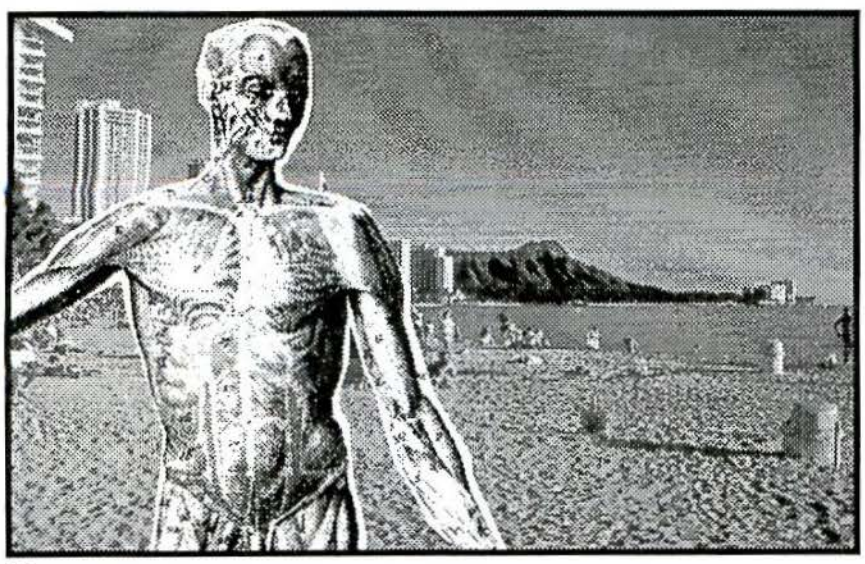
HITCH COMICS

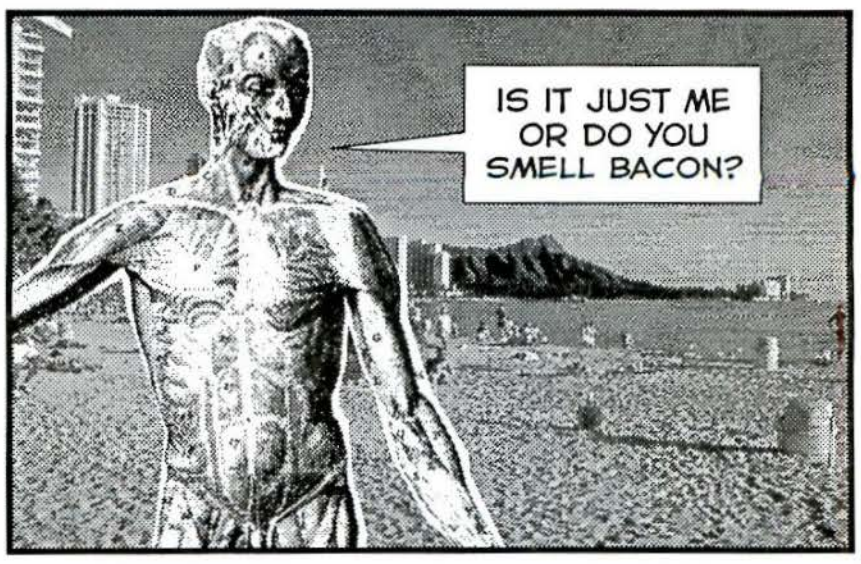












REAL LIFE ADVENTURES of the BEST BUY TROLL

by Louis Fowler

IN THE LAST ISSUE OF "HITCH," ROD SPOKE ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE WITH THE LEGENDARY "BEST BUY TROLL"...

NOW LET ME TELL YOU MINE...

FLASH BACK 2 or 3 YEARS

Hello Sir! And A-How Are You Today?

BEST BUY

THE BEST BUY TROLL

Chubicus Dorcum Ex

- 4 foot 1
- 199 lbs. (?)
- Bright red cheeks
- Happy to Work and Always willing to "Turn on the Fun"

ME: UNSHAVEN, UNWASHED, ETC. MORE THAN LIKELY DRUNK

HEY MAN. OK. I JUST WANT TO GET THIS CD.

Tee-Hee! The new Chemical Brothers! Aren't they great?!?

LOOK MAN, MY DAD JUST DIED. CAN YOU JUST RING ME UP SO I CAN GO?

2

?!?

BEST BUY

PEEPS

AND THEN, FOR THAT MOMENT, WE WERE NO LONGER CUSTOMER AND CLERK... WE WERE ONE. THE UNIVERSE & ALL IT'S MYSTERIES MADE SENSE... HE... HE... HE UNDERSTOOD MY PAIN...

BUT, A NERVOUS FROWN SLOWLY TURNS...

UPSIDE DOWN!!

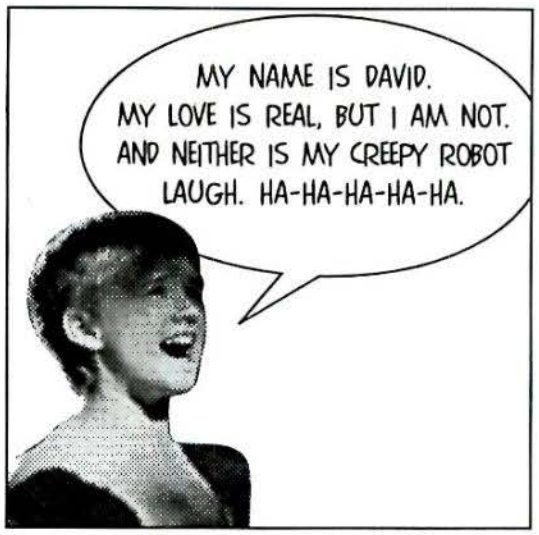
Yep! The Chemical Brothers have a remix CD! Have you heard it yet? I think it's on sale! What's your zip-code? You Have a Good Evening Now!!!

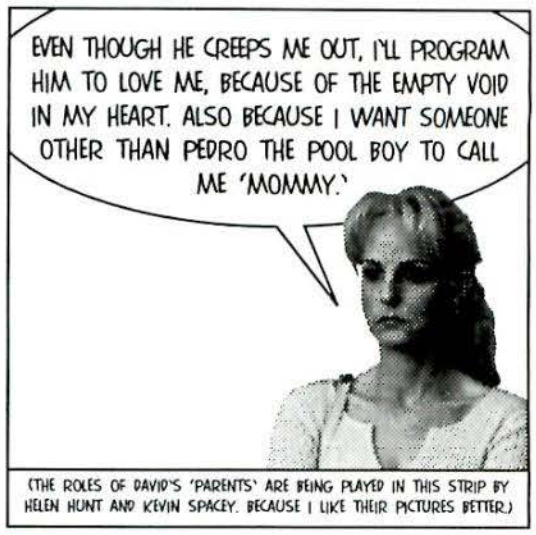
SO HERE I AM NOW, UNDRUNK, CLEAN AND MOSTLY SHAVEN. I DON'T KNOW WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MY TROLL, BUT EVERTIME I HEAR "BLOCK ROCKIN' BEATS", I'LL SHED A TEAR AND THINK OF HIM.

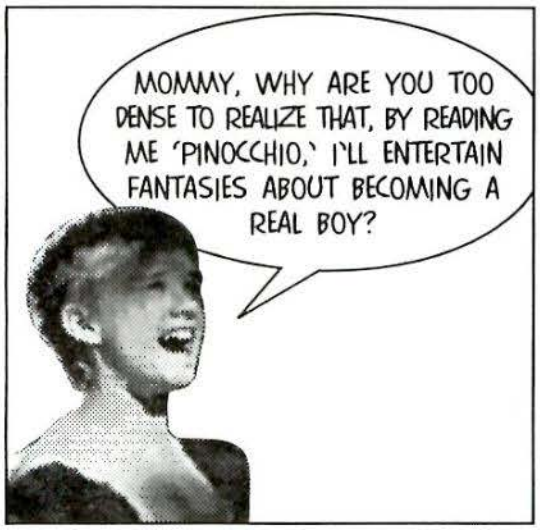
END

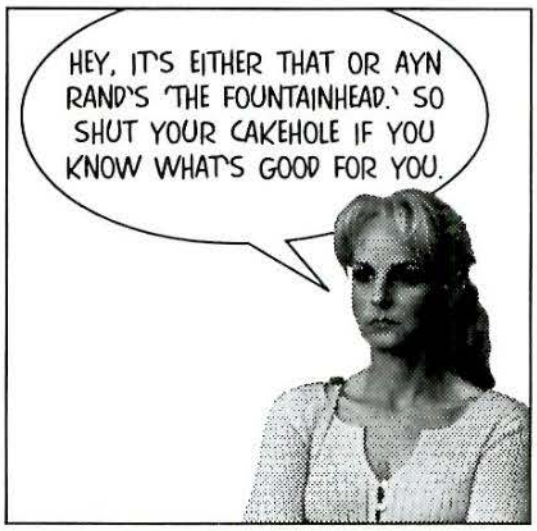
A.I.-YI-YI!

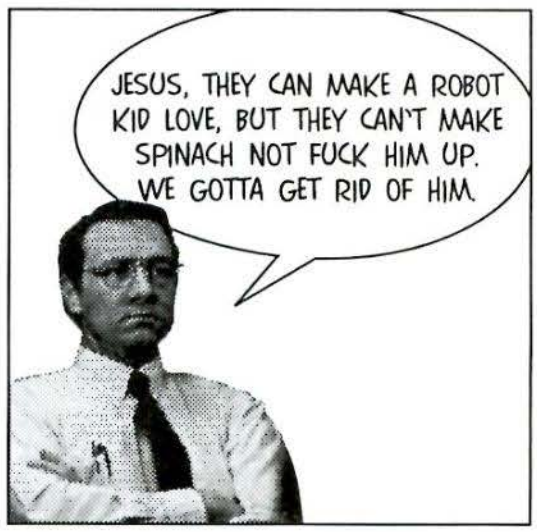
BY BRIAN WINKELER & VI LE

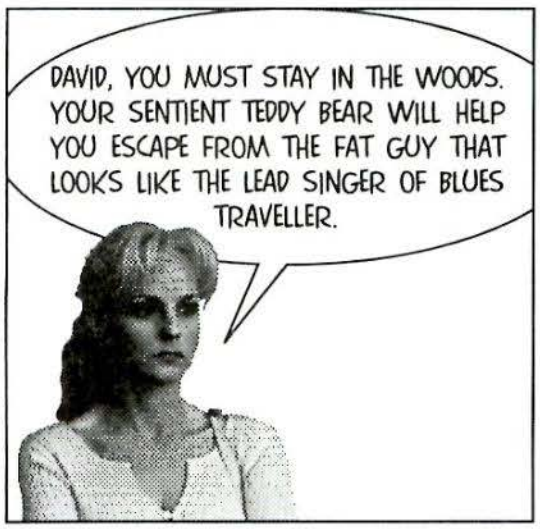


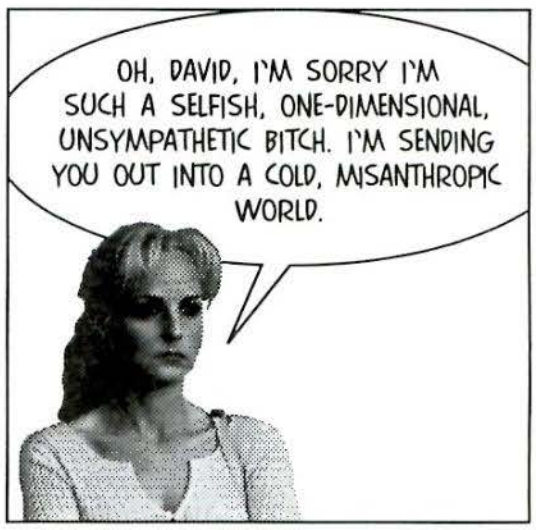

EVEN THOUGH HE CREEPS ME OUT, I'LL PROGRAM HIM TO LOVE ME, BECAUSE OF THE EMPTY VOID IN MY HEART. ALSO BECAUSE I WANT SOMEONE OTHER THAN PEDRO THE POOL BOY TO CALL ME 'MOMMY.'
(THE ROLES OF DAVID'S 'PARENTS' ARE BEING PLAYED IN THIS STRIP BY HELEN HUNT AND KEVIN SPACEY. BECAUSE I LIKE THEIR PICTURES BETTER.)

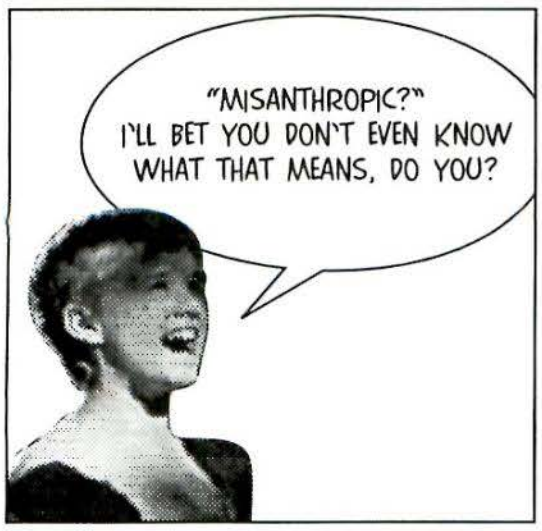


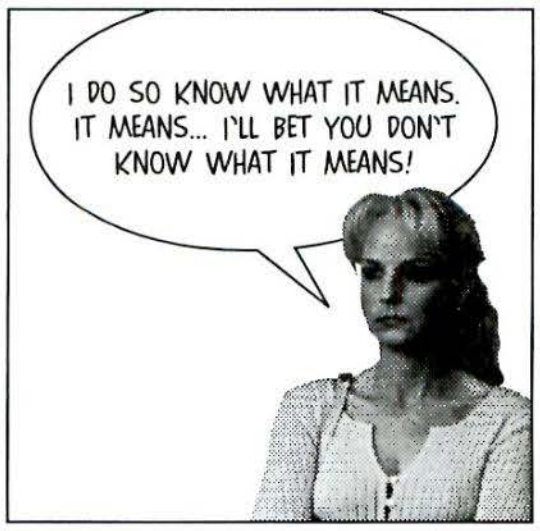


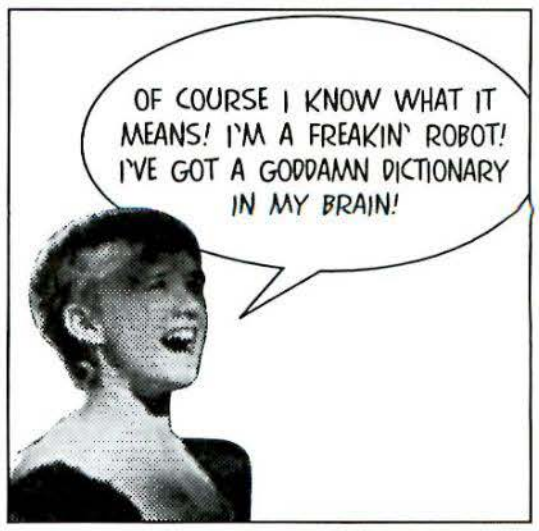



DAVID, YOU MUST STAY IN THE WOODS. YOUR SENTIENT TEDDY BEAR WILL HELP YOU ESCAPE FROM THE FAT GUY THAT LOOKS LIKE THE LEAD SINGER OF BLUES TRAVELLER.

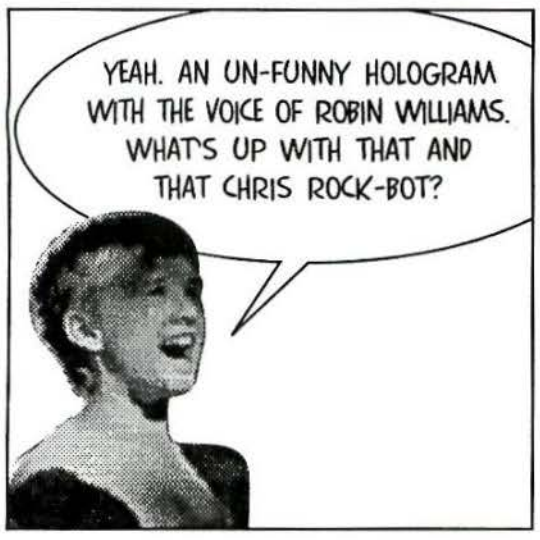

OH, DAVID, I'M SORRY I'M SUCH A SELFISH, ONE-DIMENSIONAL, UNSYMPATHETIC BITCH. I'M SENDING YOU OUT INTO A COLD, MISANTHROPIC WORLD.

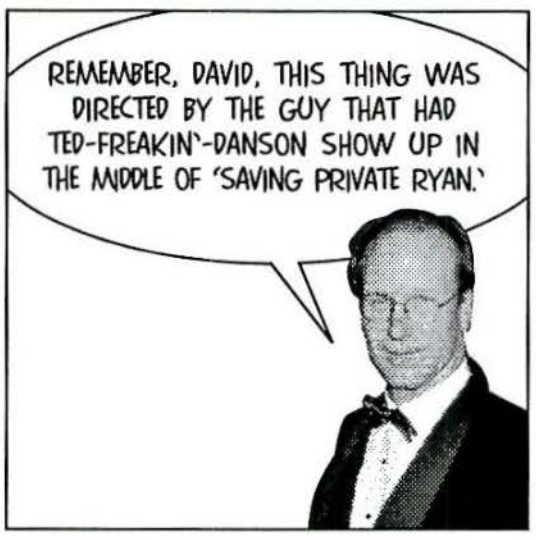


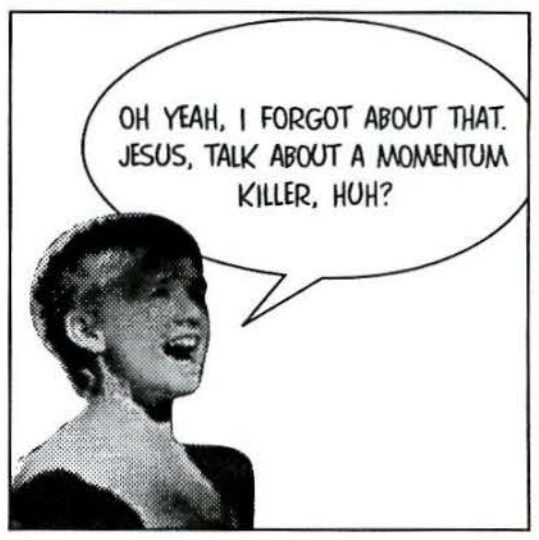


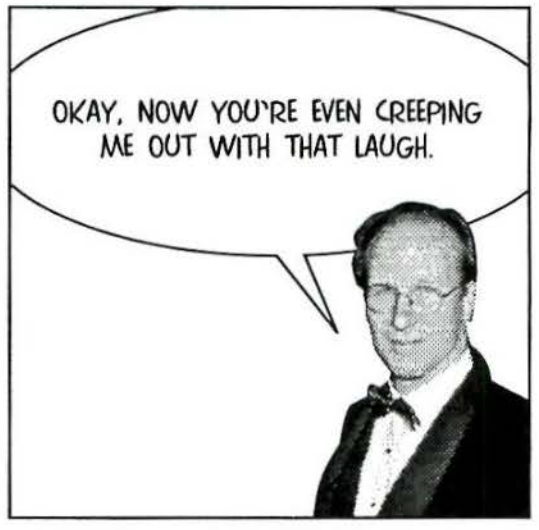


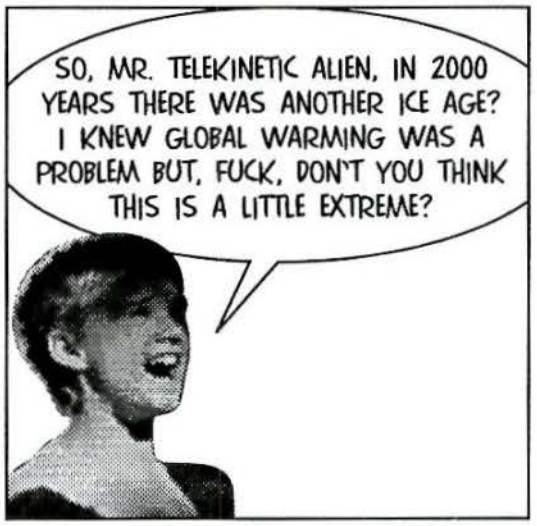
WELL, AT LEAST YOU'VE GOT YOUR NEW FRIEND, THE GAY PROSTITUTE 'BOT.
HEY, WAIT A MINUTE, I'M NOT GAY!
OH, COME ON. TAKE A LOOK IN THE MIRROR. ROUGE? EYELINER? SHOW TUNES? ALL SIGNS POINT TO G-A-Y.
NO, REALLY. I'M JUST THIN AND BRITISH! LIKE RODDY MACDOWALL!
DAVID, I'M GLAD YOU FOUND ME. I'M YOUR REAL FATHER, AND YOU HAVE AN AMAZING DESTINY TO FULFILL.
JESUS, IT'S WILLIAM HURT! I THOUGHT HE WAS DEAD!
WHAT? I'M NOT DEAD. WHO TOLD YOU I WAS DEAD?
I DUNNO. YOU WERE THE SHIT FOR A WHILE AND I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN ANYTHING IN, LIKE, TEN YEARS.
I WAS IN 'DUNE.' ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL.
OH, MY MISTAKE. THAT'S, UM, THAT'S GREAT. TV MOVIES ARE GREAT. YOU KNOW, I WENT THE OTHER WAY. TV TO OSCAR, BUT, YOU KNOW...
OKAY, I'M BACK WITH PROOF THAT I AM... JESUS, GOD! SOMEONE'S ANIMATED THE CORPSE OF WILLIAM HURT!
OH, FOR GOD'S SAKE, CAN WE GET OFF THE DEAD THING? I'M TALKING TO DAVID ABOUT THE CLUES I LEFT FOR HIM TO FIND ME.

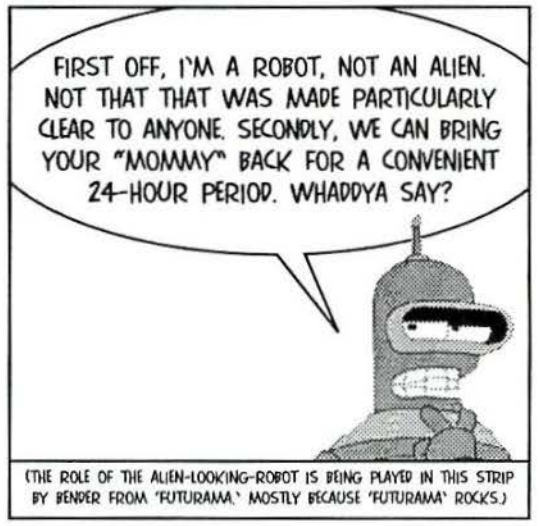



REMEMBER, DAVID, THIS THING WAS DIRECTED BY THE GUY THAT HAD TED-FREAKIN'-DANSON SHOW UP IN THE MIDDLE OF 'SAVING PRIVATE RYAN.'






SO, MR. TELEKINETIC ALIEN, IN 2000 YEARS THERE WAS ANOTHER ICE AGE? I KNEW GLOBAL WARMING WAS A PROBLEM BUT, FUCK, DON'T YOU THINK THIS IS A LITTLE EXTREME?


FIRST OFF, I'M A ROBOT, NOT AN ALIEN. NOT THAT THAT WAS MADE PARTICULARLY CLEAR TO ANYONE. SECONDLY, WE CAN BRING YOUR "MOMMY" BACK FOR A CONVENIENT 24-HOUR PERIOD. WHADDYA SAY?
(THE ROLE OF THE ALIEN-LOOKING-ROBOT IS BEING PLAYED IN THIS STRIP BY BENDER FROM 'FUTURAMA.' MOSTLY BECAUSE 'FUTURAMA' ROCKS.)

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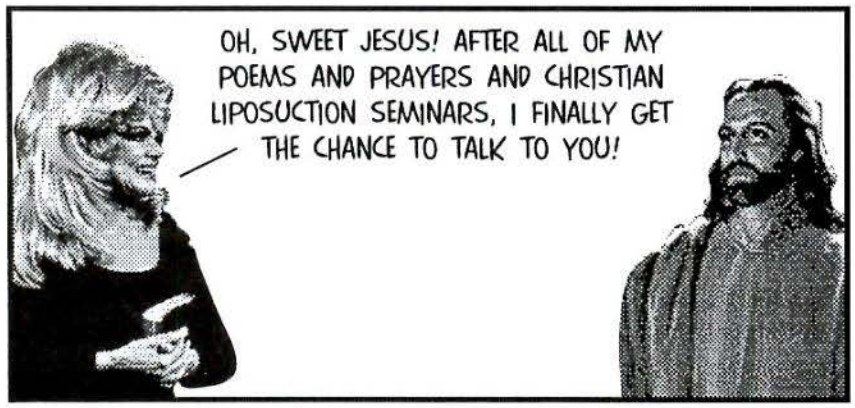
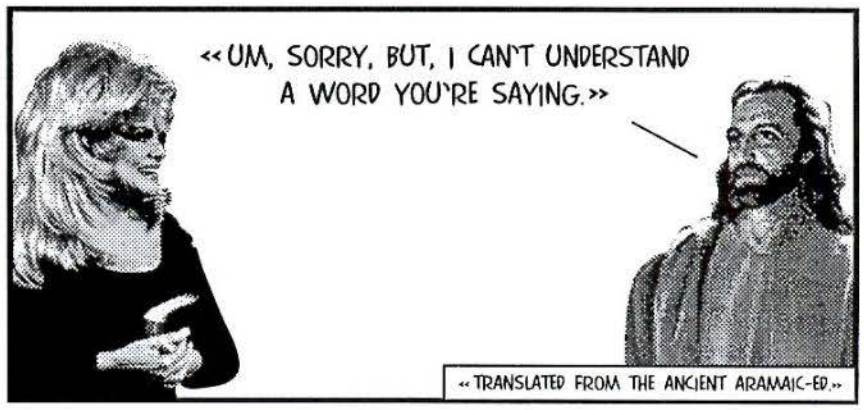
TRINITY BROADCASTING NETWORK'S GODDESS OF BEAUTY, JAN CROUCH, RECEIVES A PERSONALITY PROFILE EMAIL QUESTIONAIRRE. WHEN SHE ANSWERS THE QUESTION: "WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE DINNER WITH?" SHE IS MAGICALLY TRANSPORTED TO ANCIENT JERUSALEM, TO ATTEND:

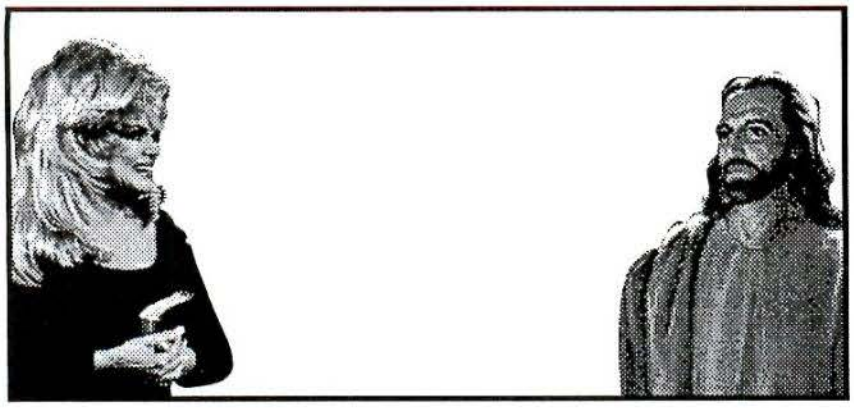
"MY DINNER WITH JESUS!"

BY BRIAN WINKELER


OH, SWEET JESUS! AFTER ALL OF MY POEMS AND PRAYERS AND CHRISTIAN LIPOSUCTION SEMINARS, I FINALLY GET THE CHANGE TO TALK TO YOU!



THERE'S NO NEED TO SPEAK IN TONGUES TO ME, SWEET, SWEET LORD.
I AM YOUR FAITH-FUL SER-VANT!
I AM SPREAD-ING YOUR MESSAGE OF LOVE AND ACCESSORIZING!



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The Emperor Has New Clothes

Los Angeles-based record label Emperor Norton has relaunched its website at *www.emperornorton.com*. The new site features the usual bios, photo galleries, tour info and MP3s, as well as exclusive downloads for its visitors – the first of which includes streaming entertainment from Ladytron and Pepe Deluxe.

You can catch a video of Pepe Deluxe live at this year's Winter Music Conference in Miami, as well as the video for "Before You Leave," recently featured in an European TV ad for Levi's.

Ladytron's page features a downloadable e-card and a Liquid Audio file of their hit "Playgirl." Visitors also can check out the *Rockschool* documentary, streamed courtesy of CDNow.

Other artists featured on the Emperor Norton site include Fantastic Plastic Machine, Arling & Cameron and Señor Coconut.

Don't Believe a Word of This

Disinformation Books' *You Are Being Lied To*, edited by Russ Kick, speaks directly to those Americans who no longer trust their government and other powerful institutions.

Among the "new revelations" contained in the volume:

• President Bush once admitted he might have met John Hinckley, the man who shot President Reagan.

• Former prisoner of war Sen. John McCain has actually led the fight to permanently seal all government records about still-missing POWs in Vietnam, assuring we'll never know the truth.

• Police at the Columbine school massacre said many witnesses reported five to eight gunmen taking part in the shooting. Though the perpetrators supposedly killed themselves a few minutes after noon, a *Denver Post* reporter wrote, "By 3:45 p.m., shots still rang out inside the school…"

• Humans already have been cloned twice.

• The CIA has outright admitted that it shipped nearly a ton of cocaine to the streets of the U.S.

Contributors to *You Are Being Lied To* include Noam Chomsky, Douglas Rushkoff and Judith Rich Harris.

A Game Based on a Film about a Planet Where Apes Evolved from Man?

To help promote Tim Burton's *Planet of the Apes*, Twentieth Century Fox has launched Project A.P.E., a unique, scavenger hunt game anyone with a global positioning satellite unit could play.

Using coordinates supplied weekly at the *planetoftheapes.com* website, players can locate a hidden cache containing a prop from the film. The first person to reach it keeps it.

Blonde Ambition

To celebrate National Blonde Day and promote MGM's *Legally Blonde*, Vidal Sassoon salons in cities gave away free "blonde transformations" last month.

Once they went golden, customers in select markets were able to participate in free "Blonde Only" screenings of the Reese Witherspoon comedy.

"We are leaders in hair color technology, so we're a perfect salon choice for helping people to go blonde," said Andrea Jean, Vidal Sassoon marketing manager.

Hair color technology?!?

Look! Up in the Sky! It's Art!

In June, artist Steven Friedman created the largest single artwork in history, as well as a solution to human suffering. And it floated above New York.

Each letter of Friedman's skywriting was more than 2,000 feet high (almost a half-mile high and more than a half-mile wide), with the completed aphroism being 20 miles wide, visible to New York City, Long Island, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Three of the Harvard-educated philosopher's aphorisms were typed into the skies.

"Rather than publish specifically to the university community, I have decided to publish in other ways," Friedman said.

His main objective is to familarize the world with a new way of processing and understanding pain and human suffering, allowing people to be happy at will. For more information, visit his website at *www.normalism.org*.

When Korean Cinema Attacks!

Subway Cinema is bringing the first major Korean film festival to New York City on Aug. 17-26 at Manhattan's Anthology Film Archives. Eleven films will be shown, with the directors in attendance.

Films include the masked wrestling comedy *The Foul King*, the lesbian schoolgirl ghost story *Memento Mori*, the dog-killing comedy *Barking Dogs Never Bite* and the anarchist, *Three Stooges*-style comedy *Attack the Gas Station*.

For info, visit *www.subwaycinema.com*.

FYI

Non-Blonde Jokes from the Press Materials for the Film *Legally Blonde*

▶ How many brunettes does it take to change a light bulb? Depends on whether she's pretty enough to get a man to help her.

▶ Why do non-blondes spend more money when going out to dinner? Because they have to buy their own drinks.

▶ Hear about the blonde who dyed her hair brown? She wanted to see what it was like to be invisible.

▶ Why should you not tell jokes about hair color? Because they're not funny and they hurt people's feelings!

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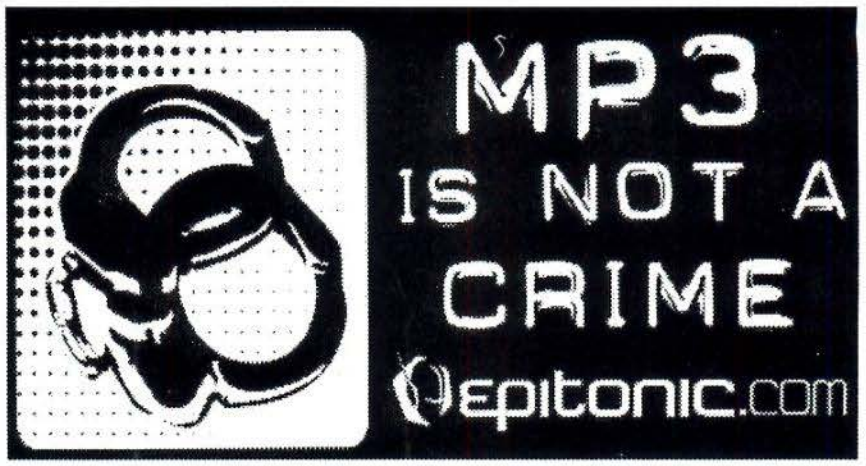

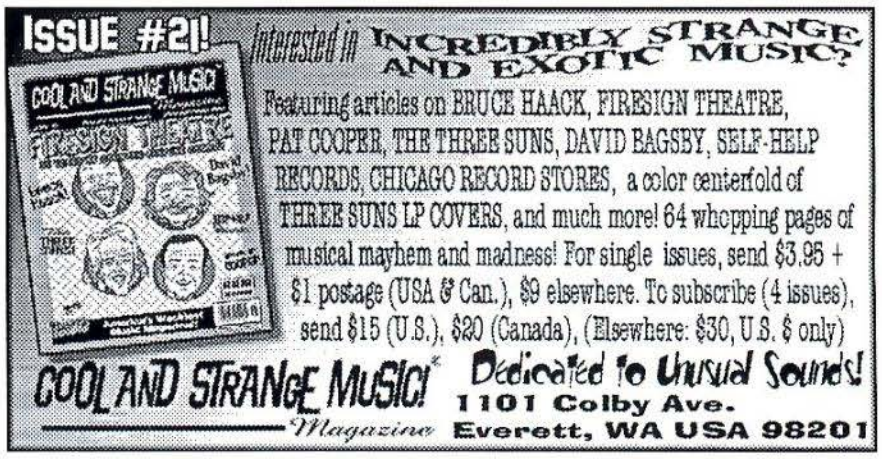
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No Place Like Home

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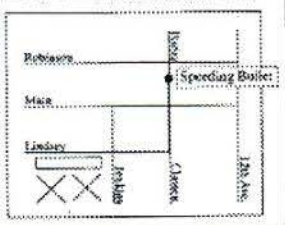

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